POLITICS AND SOCIAL CONFLICT IN SOUTH INDIA

The Non-Brahman Movement and Tamil Separatism, 1916-1929

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MADRAS PRESIDENCY

DISTRICTS

1 Ganjam
2 Vizagapatam
3 Godavari
4 Kistna
5 Guntur
6 Kurnool
7 Bellary
8 Anantapur
9 Cuddapah
10 Nellore
11 Chittoor
12 Chingleput
13 North Arcot
14 South Arcot
15 Salem
16 South Canara
17 Malabar
18 Nilgris
19 Coimbatore
20 Trichinopoly
21 Tanjore
22 Madura
23 Ramnad
24 Tinnevelly

NATIVE STATES

1 Banganapalle
2 Sandur
3 Pudukottah
4 Cochin

Madras Presidency boundary
District boundary
Other boundary
Railroad
Native state

0 — 200 Miles

Madras Presidency

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PREFACE

In recent years, more and more attention has been directed to regional developments in the Indian national movement. The present study is an attempt to evaluate the effect of a regionalistic movement during the second and third decades of the twentieth century in order to illustrate one aspect of contemporary Indian social and intellectual history. Field work for this book was undertaken in 1961–1963 under a Ford Foundation Foreign Area Training Fellowship which allowed me to stay in India for fifteen months and in England for four. However, the responsibility for the opinions stated in this book does not rest with the Ford Foundation, but with me alone. I was also supported during the year 1964 by funds from the Committee on Southern Asia Studies at the University of Chicago, where another version of this study was submitted as a Ph.D. dissertation.

Many persons have given me assistance over the past six years in the preparation of this book. While I was in India I was greatly aided by Professor K. A. Nilakanta Sastri. A. T. Sreshta gave me many interesting details about his father's role in the Justice Party, and I am particularly grateful to K. V. Gopalaswamy for showing me the diaries his father wrote in London in 1919. I also owe much to Vidwan Ira. Manian, B.O.L., B.T., who not only taught me Tamil but at an early stage in my research translated certain materials for me. His insights into Tamil non-Brahman society were particularly valuable to me in writing this book. T. N. Jayavelu also procured many valuable books and pamphlets for me.

While in England, I was given access to the collection of documents and books at the India Office Library by S. C. Sutton,

C.B.E. His kindness and graciousness permitted me to complete my work there in a short time and to make use of the unusual collection of printed Tamil books located there. Without the facilities of the India Office Library I would have been unable to undertake this project.

I have also been aided by many friends who have given me their friendly and useful criticism. Professors Myron Weiner, Milton Singer, John Leonard, R. Suntharalingam, W. H. Morris-Jones, Anthony Low, and Dr. Leo Rose have read through the entire manuscript in one form or another. Professors Burton Stein, M. N. Srinivas, and John Broomfield have read portions of the typescript and have given me many useful suggestions. To Professor Stephen N. Hay I owe a particular debt for the guidance and insight which he provided.

Few books have appeared on modern south Indian history, and so far as I am aware, none has used Tamil materials. I have therefore been unable to follow any precedent in the matter of transliteration. There is no accepted transliteration system for Tamil, despite attempts to create one, and I have followed a system which will be immediately understandable to those who read Tamil. I have spelled names of persons and places in the same way in which they were spelled in the period betwen 1916 and 1929. I have not made any effort to change the names of towns like Trichinopoly or of persons like Tyagaraja Chetti. In every instance I have sought to remain as faithful to my source material as possible.

Madras, March, 1968 Eugene F. Irschick

ABBREVIATIONS

The following abbreviations are used in the notes:

MLCP	Madras Legislative Council Proceedings
MRO	Madras Record Office
Madras NNR	Madras Native Newspaper Reports

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A map of the Madras Presidency appears as the frontispiece; a map of the mother-tongue distribution in South India appears on page 2.

INTRODUCTION

One of the most important effects of British rule in India was to provide an environment in which nationalism could develop. The foundation of schools and colleges, the recruitment of Indians into the lower ranks of the civil services, the provision of a communications network which allowed educated Indians from all parts of India to meet, and the establishment of printing presses by which Western ideas of equality and freedom were disseminated—all these helped to make Indians more aware of their political and social rights. But an awareness of those rights developed at different rates and in different ways in various parts of the country. Much of what we now consider to be political consciousness in India originated in areas where there were concentrations of institutions and individuals which provided the facilities and direction for the creation of a modern educated elite.

Bengal, most especially, came under Western influence at an early period in the British conquest; Madras and Bombay, in southern and western India respectively, lagged behind. The cultural and nationalist awakening in Bengal, therefore, occurred long before that in Bombay and Madras. Madras, in fact, of all the areas originally conquered by the British, was the last to develop nationalist and political fervor. This is not to say that Madras was immune to the effects of British rule or missionary educational enterprise. But the cultural "renaissance" in Madras occurred later and had, in many ways, a different quality from that which occurred in Bengal.

From an early period of the British connection with this southernmost part of India, Madras was considered to be an administra-

tive and cultural backwater, far removed from the headquarters of the East India Company in Bengal and later from the Government of India at Calcutta and afterwards Delhi. Almost from the beginning, therefore, Madras politicians and civil servants learned to depend on their own resources, and this implied a certain limitation of their political and administrative horizons. At the same time there arose in Madras presidency, and particularly in the city of Madras, a small but influential group of men who maintained all-India perspectives and tried to connect Madras public life with that of Bengal, Bombay, and the rest of British India. It was from this group that the founders of the Indian National Congress came, and it was they who sought to counteract the feeling that Madras was gravely imposed upon by the rest of India.

In the years between 1916 and 1929 nationalist politicians—largely Brahmans, the highest caste in the south Indian social hierarchy—were challenged by a group of non-Brahmans who had recently begun to take an active part in the politics of Madras. Non-Brahmans in this period argued that Madras interests, especially those of the "backward" non-Brahmans, were but poorly served. The conflict that developed between the Brahmans and the non-Brahmans in south India at this time was the articulation of a pre-existing social rivalry.

In a society that was largely ordered by religious beliefs and traditional customs the Brahman was recognized as the regulator of religious life and social interaction. Brahmans also had the almost exclusive right to study the sacerdotal language, Sanskrit, and the religious works written in Sanskrit. As priests, Brahmans were mediators in the religious life of south Indian Hindus. Non-Brahman caste Hindus held a position immediately beneath the Brahmans in the caste system, and were dependent upon them in certain religious ceremonies. Non-Brahmans were also the predominant landholding groups in the area. Although the three constituent units of south Indian society—the Brahmans, the non-Brahmans, and the untouchables—lived their lives largely inde-

pendent of one another, particularly in the villages, between the Brahman and the non-Brahman there was a measure of mutual dependence and competition.

Another element that reinforced the polarity between Brahmans and non-Brahmans was the belief, widely held at the turn of the century, that Brahmans were racially different from non-Brahmans. In the nineteenth century a number of European and Indian scholars who had begun to study the origins of Tamil, the language spoken in the far southeastern portion of Madras province, posited the idea that non-Brahmans were Dravidians and the original civilizers of the region, and that the Brahmans were the "Aryan invaders" from the north. These scholars believed that the Dravidians had been conquered and their institutions supplanted by an imposed Sanskritic "Aryan religion" and a caste system, by which non-Brahmans had for centuries been kept in an inferior position. Linguistically, also, there was a strong tradition for a division between Brahmans and non-Brahmans, especially in the Tamil area. The Brahmans were the guardians of "northern Sanskrit"; the non-Brahmans, or so they themselves believed, were the creators of "southern Tamil" and Tamil culture. Thus there were linguistic and cultural as well as social differences between the two groups.

In the urban, public life of south India the division between the relative positions of these two groups at the beginning of the twentieth century was strikingly apparent. Brahmans, as priests, had a long tradition of learning and quickly took advantage of the educational opportunities offered by the British presence in India. In the natural course, many Brahmans were recruited into the government services. The British administration, fearing nepotism and loss of power, sought to control the Brahman preponderance in government service. Non-Brahmans, envious of the Brahmans, made full use of the British predilections. They argued that most non-Brahmans in Madras were backward edu-

cationally and were therefore precluded from prestigeful government employment.

Newspapers in English and in the south Indian vernaculars advertised non-Brahman demands for more government jobs and popularized the myth of Dravidian cultural origin and decline. A political party was organized to legislate for non-Brahman interests in the Madras Legislative Council. But the preoccupation with local and specialized problems cut non-Brahmans off from the Indian nationalist movement. Reflecting many of the attitudes of the British bureaucracy in Madras, non-Brahmans complained that south India's interests were not being attended to by the central government. One of the interesting consequences of this attitude in the years 1916–1929 was the growth of cultural and political separatism, stimulated by the central government's financial demands on Madras, by "Brahman Aryan" dominance in the social and educational systems, and by Gandhi's individual faith, involving as the non-Brahmans saw it a belief in the "Aryan" caste structure. All these combined to inspire a strong separatist demand for the creation of a south Indian state in which the "original south Indians" would hold the power.

In analyzing the growth of separatist feeling in south India I have concentrated on the particular elements that are relevant to a discussion of the development of Dravidianist sentiment. I have used what occurred in Andhra or the Telugu-speaking area, which extends up the east coast from Madras city, only to illustrate the claims of non-Brahmans for a separate cultural identity. But I have not included a narrative of all the political activity in south India between 1916 and 1929. Therefore, I have deliberately excluded a great deal of material concerning the growth of the Congress in the Tamil region and more especially in the Telugu region. My central aim has been to delineate the manner in which south Indian non-Brahmans came to power. As a "backward" group they employed all the mechanisms common to such groups in India in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. They chal-

lenged the prevailing elite group; they demanded a position of importance and special treatment by the government; they created a myth of their own origins; and finally they decided on a drive for separatism. The non-Brahman movement in south India is important because it illustrates this kind of development extraordinarily well. Moreover, it is illustrative of the way in which such movements, seldom dealt with by nationalist historians, collaborated with the British and at critical points in their career received valuable assistance from them. What is also important in this movement is its relevance to an analysis of the process by which political integration takes place in modern India. Many scholars of modern India have decried the development of regionalist movements and the overemphasis on caste as destructive of national life and inimical to India's progress as a unified nation. Movements undertaken by the non-Brahmans, they suggest, intensify loyalties which prevent the development of bonds that would surmount caste and linguistic lines. Others have said that the effect of the non-Brahman movement—and of other movements like it—has been not only to poison the springs of unified action but also, through its attempt to prevent Brahmans from entering the educational institutions of the area and the government services, to produce great intellectual and professional wastage which modern India can ill afford. There is little question but that attempts by "backward" groups such as the non-Brahmans to displace the Brahman elite have produced considerable hardship and hatred and a dissipation of professional skills. But it can also be said that any attempt to modernize an underdeveloped country and to create an educated and politically aware electorate is bound to create movements of this kind. Furthermore, the friction that existed between Brahman and non-Brahman in the 1920's is a typical by-product of the demand for more political, economic, and educational privilege by any "backward" group. The passing of the old order and the establishment of a modern society are bound to undermine relations based on ascription and the position

in society which those ascriptive rights imply. The development of the non-Brahman movement was one of the ways in which this transformation manifested itself in modern India.

Claims for a separate political entity have also been a common feature of India's recent past. These claims, like the social conflict with which I am concerned in this book, are also an ingredient in the creation of a unified Indian nation out of a mass of diverse linguistic, racial, and cultural groups. Tamil separatism has attracted considerable attention from social scientists because its articulation has been characterized by a militancy born of particularly strong feelings of cultural and social uniqueness. This feeling of uniqueness has been effectively exploited by a well-organized political party, the D.M.K. The separatism represented by the aspirations of many non-Brahmans is extreme, but it does not differ in kind from the separatist ideals of other movements that have developed elsewhere in the subcontinent. Like the social conflict between the Brahmans and the non-Brahmans, the Tamil separatist movement would appear to be an articulation by emerging elites of demands and aspirations which is not in itself a potent threat to the unity or security of the nation. In this analysis I have made an attempt to understand those aspirations and some of the ways in which they have been satisfied.

Chapter 1

SOCIETY AND POLITICS IN MADRAS PRESIDENCY

At the beginning of the twentieth century, Madras presidency was one of the most extensive of all the British territories in India. It stretched from the tip of the Indian peninsula, Cape Comorin, halfway up the east coast to Bengal. A part of it lay on the Indian Ocean, touching Bombay presidency to the north, and another segment extended westward from the Bay of Bengal, bordering on both Bombay presidency and the native state of Hyderabad. Lady Pentland, whose husband was governor of Madras from 1912 to 1918, described the extent of the presidency as "bigger than any other Indian province except Burma, and nearly five times bigger than Scotland, with a population nearly ten times bigger, speaking seven principal languages." And yet, she continued, "it has a special *Madrasi* clannishness, perhaps as a recompense for its isolation at an extremity, like Scotland."[1]

The sense of isolation that many Englishmen felt in Madras was due partly to its remoteness from the center of government in Calcutta (or, after 1911, Delhi). But in other ways Madras was cut off from the rest of India. Most north Indians spoke one of several Indo-Aryan languages that had many affinities to Sanskrit. By contrast, the majority of the inhabitants of Madras presidency spoke one of five Dravidian languages, the most important of which were Tamil and Telugu. Telugu was spoken in all the northern districts of the province as well as in the area known as Rayalseema,

[1] Lady Pentland, *The Right Honourable John Sinclair, Lord Pentland G.C.S.I.* (London, 1918), p. 180.

LANGUAGES

Non Dravidian

Dravidian

Telugu

Kanarese

Tulu

Malayalam

Tamil

Telugu mother tongue

more than 15%

10-15%

less than 15%

500 and 1,000 foot contour

0 — 200 Miles

Bombay · Hyderabad · Vizagapatam · Bezwada · Madras · Mysore · Pondicherry · Trichinopoly · Cochin · Tuticorin · Trivandrum

TRIBAL LANGUAGES · MARATHI · ORIYA · TELUGU · KANARESE · TULU · TAMIL · MALAYALAM · WESTERN

Mother-tongue Distribution in South India

to the north and west of Madras city; the Tamil–Telugu dividing line lay just north of the city of Madras. In 1911 Tamil was the mother tongue of seventeen million people in the southeastern part of the province, but in the Tamil areas there were also considerable numbers of Telugu-speakers, mainly as a result of southerly migrations in the fifteenth century and later during the hegemony of the Vijayanagar kingdom. In lesser numbers, the three other Dravidian languages of Madras were Kannada, Malayalam, and Tulu. The Kannada area lay close to the eastern side of the native state of Mysore. Malayalam was limited to the Malabar district on the west coast. The Tulu area, even smaller, was also on the west coast. In addition, two Indo-Aryan languages, Oriya and Hindustanti, were spoken by certain small elements of the population.

Aside from its physical and linguistic separateness, the Madras land settlement system at the time of its implementation was also unique in British Indian practice. During the last decade of the eighteenth century and the first decade of the nineteenth, when revenue settlements were being made in Bengal and in the northern districts of what later became Madras presidency, an attempt was made to hand over the ownership of the land to a number of large landholders, or *zamindars*. They were given control of the land in Bengal and in large areas of the districts to the north of Madras city, commonly referred to as the Northern Circars. Because many of the *zamindars* were unable to pay the required rent on their holdings, considerable numbers of these settlements failed. The government then took over the holdings to auction them off again. At the beginning of the twentieth century, 29 percent of the area of Madras presidency, however, was *zamindari*. The characteristic system of the presidency, however, was to settle much of the remaining areas directly with the peasants. Called *ryotwari* (after *ryot* or peasant), this system not only differentiated Madras presidency from Bengal but along with *zamindari*

tenure was the other major land tenure system used in British India. In the southern Tamil districts and in the poor region of Rayalseema or the Madras Deccan land settlements were sometimes made with important peasants or *mirasdars* who held the right to the perquisites of a village official or held the land in common. Although *mirasdars* are still found in many Telugu and Tamil villages today, by the middle of the nineteenth century the *ryotwari* land system had superseded the *mirasdar* system in all but a few villages.

All three elements—geographical remoteness and the feeling of isolation, the language difference, and the existence of the *ryotwari* settlement—contributed to the development of what could be called the "Madras style" of administration. In many ways, the elements that composed this style were subjective, and had much to do with the special way in which British administrators in Madras envisioned their work. For one thing, the districts of Madras were larger than those of any other province and the Madras members of the Indian Civil Service (I.C.S.) thought themselves overworked. Furthermore, the Madras I.C.S. members insisted that the languages of the presidency were more difficult than Hindustani. Since they were apt to be transferred from one language area of Madras to another, they were obliged to spend much time in studying languages. The *ryotwari* settlement also meant that the District Officer in Madras typically considered himself very knowledgeable about peasant affairs. Finally, many Madras civilians believed that it was impossible for a member of the British bureaucracy from Madras to rise to the top of the administrative ladder in the central government. Many Madras politicians and bureaucrats in the decade following the First World War shared the belief that the political and administrative institutions and traditions of Madras were not understood by the central government, and this had much to do with their feeling of separateness.

Social Structure in the Tamil and Telugu Areas

Above and beyond all these points of difference between south India and north India was a peculiarly social one: the extraordinarily high position of the Brahmans in the social hierarchy, particularly in the Tamil and Malayalam areas. This was not a new phenomenon. For nearly one hundred fifty years, from the early 1700's to the mid-nineteenth century, the Madras bureaucracy, especially in the districts, was dominated by Desastha Brahmans, originally from Maharashtra in western India.[2] After the 1850's the Telugu and particularly the Tamil Brahmans, who together comprised only 3.2 percent of the total population, enhanced their position in the social system by gradually filling the great majority of administrative and educational positions then open to Indians. These Tamil and Telugu Brahmans had for centuries been respected as the guardians of Sanskritic learning and religion. Since only a few non-Brahman groups in the Telugu districts, such as the Velamas, were permitted to study Sanskrit, the Brahmans exercised almost complete control over the body of Hindu religious works written in Sanskrit. One of the great centers of Brahmanical learning was Tanjore, in the heart of the Tamil country. The author of the *Tanjore Gazeteer* (1906) described the position of the Brahmans there in these terms: "Brahmans versed in the sacred law are numerous in Tanjore; Vedic sacrifices are performed on the banks of its streams; Vedic chanting is performed in a manner rarely rivalled; philosophical treatises are published in Sanskrit verse; and religious associations exist, the privilege of initiation into which is eagerly sought for and the rules of which are earnestly followed even to the extent of relinquishing the world."[3] A knowledge of Sanskrit and access to Hindu scriptures also made Tamil and Telugu Brahmans indispensable as priests at family and domestic occasions such as weddings.

[2] See Robert Frykenberg, *Guntur District, 1788–1848: A History of Local Influence and Central Authority in South India* (Oxford, 1965).
[3] F. R. Hemmingway, *Tanjore* (Madras, 1906), p. 68.

In both the Tamil and the Telugu areas, Brahmans were traditionally divided into two classes. One group had the role of "teaching the Vedas, performing and superintending sacrifice, and preserving the moral principles of the people."[4] The other group traditionally advised Hindu kings in matters of justice and administration; they were called *Laukic* or secular, as opposed to the Veda-readers or Vaidic Brahmans.[5] Tamil Brahmans were classed into two categories. The Sri Vaishnava Brahmans, or Iyengars, of the Tamil country were devotees of Vishnu. The great majority of the other Tamil Brahman group, the Smarthas or Iyers, were Shaivites, devotees of Shiva.

The second major division in south Indian society was the non-Brahmans, a group of castes, mostly peasants, who ranked below the Brahmans in social status but above the untouchables. The most important of these cultivating castes was the Tamil Vellalas. Not only did they form an important part of the rural population but also they were employed in government service, particularly as village revenue collectors (*karnams*) and in trade and commerce.[6] In some districts, such as Tanjore and Tinnevelly, Vellalas were often very orthodox in their religious practice, sometimes even more so than the Brahmans.[7] The Vellalas were for the most part concentrated in the inland areas west of the city of Madras, particularly the districts of Coimbatore, Salem, and North Arcot; there were also large numbers further south in Tinnevelly district. One description of the Vellalas' position in Coimbatore characterized them as "truly the backbone of the district; it is

[4] India, Census Commissioner, *Census of India, 1891: Madras* (Madras, 1893), XIII, 262–263.

[5] *Ibid.*, p. 263. See also André Béteille, *Caste, Class, and Power: Changing Patterns of Stratification in a Tanjore Village* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1965), p. 58.

[6] Hemmingway, *Tanjore*, p. 82.

[7] India, Census Commissioner, *Census of India, 1901: Madras* (Madras, 1902) XV, Pt. 1, 183, gives an account of Vellala domestic customs and relations with Brahmans.

these who by their industry and frugality create and develop wealth, support the administration, and find the money for imperial and district demands; as their own proverb says, 'The Vellalar's goad is the ruler's sceptre.'"[8] Because the Vellalas were so widely diffused throughout the Tamil area, they could not protect themselves against "invasions" of subcaste groups (*jatis*) who called themselves Vellalas but whose origin was among groups considerably inferior to the Vellalas in social position.[9] Accounts of the emergence of Vellalas as important landholders in Madura and other districts indicate that they achieved this position only under British rule, usually by ousting their Telugu counterparts, the Kapu or Reddi cultivators, who had previously migrated into the area.[10]

Like the Vellalas, the Reddis or Kapus were a peasant subcaste, part of a complex of subcastes that also included the Kammas and the Velamas (usually considered to be offshoots of the Kapus).[11] The center of Reddi strength lay in the dry region

[8] F. A. Nicholson, *Manual of the Coimbatore District* (Madras, 1887), p. 56.

[9] *Census of India, 1901: Madras*, XV, Pt. 1, 184. One proverb indicates that Kallans and Maravans by stages become Vellalas (Hemmingway, *Tanjore*, p. 82).

[10] J. H. Nelson, *The Madura Country: A Manual* (Madras, 1868), pp. 29–30. For explanations of the manner in which Vellalas first came into the Tamil area see S. Radhakrishna Aiyar, *A General History of Pudukottai State* (Pudukottai, 1916), pp. 54, 57, and Arthur Cox, *A Manual of the North Arcot District* (Madras, 1881), p. 89. The manner in which Telugus came into the Tamil area is well analyzed in Burton Stein, "Coromandel Trade in Medieval India" in John Parker (ed.), *Merchants and Scholars: Essays in the History of Exploration and Trade* (Minneapolis, 1965), pp. 57–60.

[11] *Census of India, 1891: Madras*, XIII, 237: "'Kamma' means an ear ornament, and one tradition states that a valuable jewel of this kind, belonging to Raja Pratapa Rudra, fell into the hands of an enemy. One section of the Kapu caste boldly attacked the foe and recovered the jewel, and were therefore, called Kammas, while another section ran away and accordingly received the name of Velama (*veli*, away)."

called Rayalseema and they claimed as their heritage many Reddi kingdoms dating back to the fifteenth century. The Reddis, along with the Kammas, who were the major cultivating group in the deltaic region surrounding the mouths of the Godavari and the Kistna rivers, migrated into the Tamil districts at the time of the Vijayanagar hegemony, and to this day form an important though never majority element in the plateau area that stretches from North Arcot district just west of Madras city southward to Madura district (see Mother-tongue Distribution Map).[12] The Velamas adopted many Brahmanical customs, though they ate meat and drank liquor. The rajahs of Bobbili, Pittapur, and Venkatagiri and other *zamindars* and large landholders in the littoral north of Madras city were Velamas.[13]

The Balija Naidus, another Telugu caste, also probably had a former connection with the Kapus.[14] Balija Naidus were found throughout the province. They were ordinarily classified as Telugu-speaking traders but the majority were in fact cultivators. Many Balijas who maintained trade connections in various parts of the province were often of necessity bi- or even tri-lingual. The successors of the Vijayanagar empire, the Nayaks of Madura and Tanjore, were Balija Naidus.[15]

[12] India, Census Commissioner, *Census of India, 1931: Madras* (Madras, 1932), XIV, Pt. 1, 289. The settlement of the Telugus in the Tamil districts indicates a preference of Telugu, Kamma, and Reddi cultivators for the high ground and for the black cotton soils also typical of Rayalseema.

[13] One account of the Venkatagiri family describes the founder as a Reddi (*Census of India, 1891: Madras*, XIII, 220). The usual title accorded the Velamas is Naidu or Nayudu, but the use of the title "Naidu" along with others such as "Pillai" and "Mudali" (both Vellala names) by numerous groups tends to make the identification of persons purely by names of this sort a complicated and uncertain process. See *Census of India, 1901: Madras*, XV, Pt. 1, 178.

[14] *Census of India, 1891: Madras*, XIII, 236.

[15] *Census of India, 1901: Madras*, XV, Pt. 1, 144. For a discussion of the position of the Balija Naidus in Bellary, a largely Telugu district, see John Kelsall, *Manual of the Bellary District* (Madras, 1872), p. 82.

Another important non-Brahman group, roughly equal in status to the Tamil Vellalas and the Telugu Reddis, Kammas, and Velamas, was the Malayalam-speaking Nairs, who came from Malabar district and from the native states of Cochin and Travancore. They had a strong tradition of education and professional training, even for women, and were second only to the Tamil and Telugu Brahmans in the administrative and educational system of Madras presidency.

These non-Brahman Hindu castes along with the minority Brahmans and certain other minor groups comprised approximately four-fifths of the total population of Madras. The remainder were the outcastes or untouchables. Though separated from Brahmans and non-Brahman caste Hindus in religious and social terms as well as by segregation in village dwelling patterns, they played an essential role in the life of rural Madras. In traditional society they were invariably scavengers, and they participated in certain caste Hindu social and religious observances. Here again there was a linguistic division: the most important Tamil untouchables were Paraiyans, Pulaiyans, and Pallans; the two great Telugu outcaste groups were the Malas and the Madigas.[16] By the last decade of the nineteenth century, largely owing to the work of missionaries and the government, outcaste groups, particularly in the Tamil area, were becoming aware of their political and social rights and were beginning to realize the inequality of their economic as well as ritual status.

During the second decade of the twentieth century, three other groups outside the orbit of south Indian Hindu society, and numerically small, gradually assumed an important part in the social and political life of Madras presidency. One of them, the Saurashtras (originally from Saurashtra in western India) was a

[16] The position of the untouchables relative to the Brahmans and non-Brahmans in a contemporary Tamil village in Tanjore is well analyzed by E. Kathleen Gough, "The Social Structure of a Tanjore Village," in McKim Marriott (ed.), *Village India* (Chicago, 1955), p. 37.

group of weavers known in Madura, the city in which they were concentrated, as Patnulkarans or "silk-thread people." They spoke a dialect of Gujarati called Patnuli or Khatri. Saurashtras often claimed Brahman status but neither the census enumerators nor the Tamil Brahmans ever conceded this position.[17] The second group, the Indian Christians, were largely converts from untouchables in the Telugu area.[18] In the Tamil districts, they also were converts from untouchables, but some were former toddy-tappers (extractors of the juice of certain palm trees for fermentation) called Nadars, and some were Vellalas. On the whole, their position in society was much higher than that of their Telugu counterparts.[19] The third group, the south Indian Muslims, were largely urban, concentrated in Madras city as well as in North Arcot district. Many Muslims owned important industrial properties and were beginning to take a significant part in the politics of the area.

In certain parts of the province, particularly the Tamil districts, this broad division of society into three large groups — Brahmans, non-Brahmans, and untouchables — was reinforced by two other elements. One of these was the existence of a series of Brahman and non-Brahman villages, a vestige of the time when medieval south Indian kings made grants of land to groups of Brahmans. The social division and tension which the proximity of these villages to one another could produce is illustrated by the remarks of an English observer in the last years of the eighteenth century concerning the area that later became Tinnevelly district:

> The difference [between non-Brahman and Brahman villages] is characterized by nothing more, than that the influence of Bramins

[17] *Census of India, 1901: Madras*, XV, Pt. 1, 183. See also A. J. Saunders, "The Saurashtra Community in Madura, South India," *American Journal of Sociology*, XXXII (1926), 787–799.

[18] A. T. Fishman, *Culture Change and the Underprivileged: A Study of Madigas in South India Under Christian Guidance* (Madras, 1941).

[19] B. S. Baliga, *Tanjore District Handbook* (Madras, 1957), p. 156.

> and their property predominates in the agrahara vaidiky; the former rarely allowing soodras [non-Brahmans] to intermix in their villages, for fear their importance and estimation as a community of Bramins, may be diminished by a connexion with such inferior parties; and on the other hand, the soodras as carefully and jealously avoiding the admission of Bramins, however small, as their property would draw to them too much consideration, usurp all authority, and invade their rights.[20]

Many Brahman villages existed in the Tamil country, but probably the most famous was Kallidaikurchi, in Tinnevelly district, which proved to be a point of considerable friction between Brahmans and non-Brahmans in the decade following the first World War.

Another element that worked to transform long-standing caste rivalries into political conflict in the twentieth century centered on the question of whether or not the non-Brahmans could be classified as Sudras. In the traditional *varna* hierarchy, Sudras were the fourth and last, and hence were not *dvijas* or twice-born. Though the term Sudra was generally applied to numerous non-Brahman caste Hindu groups such as the Vellalas, Kammas, and Reddis, many British administrators and some missionaries found this usage as it denoted Tamil non-Brahmans both offensive and inapplicable. J. H. Nelson, the district officer in Madura, was perhaps the most outspoken on this question. In one passage in his *Madura Country* he says "There is no like necessity to use the term 'Sudra.' If known too, it is never used by ordinary natives, who speak of one another as being members of particular tribes, castes and families, as Maravans, Kallans, Ayyangars and others; or as Merchants, Barbers, schoolmasters and others; never as Sudras in opposition to Brahmans. In fact the term Sudra would appear to be used by Brahmans alone in speaking of persons of

[20] W. K. Firminger (ed.), *The Fifth Report from the Select Committee of the House of Commons on the Affairs of the East India Company* (Calcutta, 1916), III, 337.

low condition."[21] It is probably true that in the 1860's the Tamil non-Brahmans did not feel as strongly about the issue as Nelson did, but by the beginning of the twentieth century there was considerable hostility among educated Tamil non-Brahmans against the use of Sudra to apply to Vellalas and other similar groups.

Literacy and Occupation

At the start of the twentieth century, the great landholding caste groups in Madras were the Vellalas in the Tamil areas, the Balija Naidus in both the Telugu and Tamil districts, and the Kammas and Reddis in the Telugu country. Both Tamil and Telugu Brahmans also had sizable landholdings, however. No complete statistics of landholdings by caste are available for the early years of the twentieth century in Madras presidency, but of a total Tamil Brahman work force of 35,450 males in 1911, some 11,155 derived income from land.[22] The large landowners, particularly the *zamindars*, and the main peasant groups were all non-Brahman caste Hindus. Census figures on factory ownership in 1911 indicate that here, too, non-Brahmans—mainly Balija Naidus, Vellalas, Kapus, Nattukottai Chettis, and Komatis—were far ahead of the Brahmans.[23]

It is in the distribution of occupations demanding literate skills, and particularly government jobs, that the relative positions of Brahmans and non-Brahmans can be seen most clearly. In 1921,

[21] Nelson, *Madura Country*, pp. 12–13. See also J. D. M. Derrett, "J. H. Nelson: A Forgotten Administrator-Historian of India," in C. H. Philips (ed.), *Historians of India, Pakistan and Ceylon* (London, 1961), pp. 354–372.

[22] India, Census Commissioner, *Census of India, 1911: Madras* (Madras, 1912), XII, Pt. 2, 268. E. Kathleen Gough gives an interesting account of a village where Tamil Smartha Braham *mirasdars* once owned large amounts of land. See her "Caste in a Tanjore Village," in E. R. Leach (ed.), *Aspects of Caste in South India, Ceylon, and Northeast Pakistan* (Cambridge, 1960), pp. 11–60.

[23] *Census of India, 1911: Madras*, XII, Pt. 2, 260.

banks and other money establishments employed Telugu and Tamil Brahmans, Komatis (Telugu Vaisyas), and Vellalas; these four groups held almost two-thirds of the available positions. In public administration there was a marked preponderance of Tamil Brahmans, with Vellalas and Telugu Brahmans occupying second place, followed by Nairs and Balija Naidus. In positions concerned with law, instruction, and letters, the pattern was similar.[24]

In government service, figures compiled by the Madras government in 1912 (Table 1) illustrate the consistently strong domination of the Brahmans in many upper levels of government service. The distribution of appointments among Deputy Collectors, Sub-Judges, and *District Munsifs* (*all high positions so far as Indian* employment was concerned) show that Brahmans in 1912 held 55, 82.3, and 72.6 percent of the posts then available to Indians. By contrast, non-Brahman Hindus (probably Vellalas, Balija Naidus, Nairs, and a sprinkling of Kammas and Reddis) held only 21.5, 16.7, and 19.5 percent of the total appointments. The Indian Christians and Muslims were well behind.

An analysis of the caste distribution among those employed in the upper levels of the Revenue and Judicial departments of the Madras government reaffirms these proportions. Brahmans again held an important lead in the ranks of Tahsildar and Deputy Tahsildar, with 349 posts compared to 134 held by non-Brahman Hindus. Among the English Head Clerks, Sheristadars of District Courts, and Sheristadars of Sub-Courts, Brahmans held 44 posts as against 16 held by non-Brahman Hindus. Table 2 shows that the total average appointments in the Revenue and Judicial departments in 1917 held by non-Brahman Hindus, Indian Christians, and Muslims was 33.3 percent.

The position of the Tamil Brahmans in administrative and professional life was unquestionably due to their unusually high

[24] India, Census Commissioner, *Census of India, 1921: Madras* (Madras, 1922), XIII, Pt. 2, 254–260.

Table 1
Distribution of Selected Government Jobs in 1912

	No.	Percent of Total Male Population	Percent of Appointments
Deputy Collectors			
Brahmans	77	3.2	55
Non-Brahman Hindus	30	85.6	21.5
Muslims	15	6.6	10.5
Indian Christians	7	2.7	5
Europeans and Eurasians	11	.1	8
Sub-Judges			
Brahmans	15		83.3
Non-Brahman Hindus	3		16.7
Muslims	nil		
Indian Christians	nil		
Europeans and Eurasians	nil		
District Munsifs			
Brahmans	93		72.6
Non-Brahman Hindus	25		19.5
Muslims	2		1.6
Indian Christians	5		3.9
Europeans and Eurasians	3		2.4

SOURCE: Great Britain, Parliamentary Papers, Vol. XXI (*Reports from Commissioners, etc.*, Vol. XI), "Royal Commission on the Public Services," Appendix Vol. II, Minutes of Evidence relating to the Indian and Provincial Services taken in Madras from the 8th to the 17th of January, 1913," Cd. 7293, 1914, pp. 103–104.

literacy rate, in both Tamil and English. Telugu Brahmans, also, were highly literate (see Table 3), but no non-Brahman group could even approach them. According to the 1921 Census, Tamil Brahmans had a male literacy rate of 71.5 percent. The strange phenomenon of falling literacy rates among Telugu and Tamil Brahmans between 1901 and 1921 was explained in the 1921 Census as the result of a "number of persons of other less educated castes being returned as Brahmans; hence the number of Brahmans has been unduly swollen and the number of illiterates has

Table 2

Distribution of Selected Government Jobs in 1917

Revenue and Judicial Departments	Brahman	Non-Brahman	Indian Christian	Muslim	Percent of Non-Brahman, Christian, and Muslim Appointments
Tahsildars, including Huzur Sharistadars	135	69	14	12	41.3
Deputy Tahsildars	214	65	21	10	30.9
English Head Clerks	16	5	2	1	33.3
Sharistadars of District Courts	13	6	1	2	40.9
Sharistadars of Sub-Courts	15	4	1	nil	25
Total average of non-Brahmans, Indian Christians, and Muslims in Revenue and Judicial departments					33.3

Source: MRO, Home (Miscellaneous), Ordinary Series, G.O. 1123, October 23, 1917.

Table 3
Male Literacy of Selected Castes, 1901–1921
(in percents)

	1901	1911	1921
Tamil Brahman	73.6	71.9	71.5
Telugu Brahman	67.3	68.2	59.7
Nair	39.5	41.9	42.9
Chetti	32.0	39.1	39.5
Indian Christian	16.2	20.4	21.9
Nadar	15.4	18.1	20.0
Balija Naidu, Kavarai	14.3	20.9	22.3
Vellala	6.9	24.6	24.2
Kamma	4.8	12.2	13.6
Kapu, Reddi	3.8	9.0	10.2
Velama	2.5	3.6	7.0

SOURCE: India, Census Commissioner, *Census of India: Madras, 1921*, XIII, Pt. 1, 128–129.

increased out of all proportion to the literate."[25] Given the rising literacy rates among all other caste groups, this drop is most curious; but the important point is the relative position of the Tamil Brahmans as compared with Balijas, Chettis, Nairs, Vellalas, and Indian Christians.

A knowledge of English was essential for employment in government service, as well as in teaching and politics. In these areas, the Tamil Brahmans led all the other caste groups. In 1921, 28.2 percent of all Tamil Brahman males were literate in English; for Telugu Brahman males the figure was 17.3 percent. By 1921, six of the non-Brahman groups—Nairs, Chettis, Vellalas, Balija Naidus, Indian Christians, and Nadars—had achieved fairly high literacy rates. But they could not compete with the Tamil and Telugu Brahmans so far as English was concerned. Two Telugu non-Brahman caste groups, the Kammas and the Reddis, who also had relatively high male literacy rates by 1921 (13.6 and 10.2

[25] *Census of India, 1921: Madras*, XIII, Pt. 1, 119.

percent, respectively), had an English literacy among males of less than one percent (see Table 4).

The steep rise in literacy—in English, Telugu, Tamil, and Malayalam—among the important non-Brahman caste Hindus between 1901 and 1921 suggests a central reason for their entrance into Madras politics during this period. Vellalas, Chettis, Nadars, and Nairs were all caste groups moving upward in the public life of Madras. There is also little doubt but that by the middle of the second decade, non-Brahmans, seeing that their literacy rate was rising and that the potential for advancement existed, were beginning to resent the almost exclusive control of government jobs and political life by Brahmans. Furthermore, province-wide communications among non-Brahmans through caste associations permitted the quick transmission of the news of success in high school and college examinations. Both educational advance and a consciousness of this advance were essential ingredients in the growth of non-Brahman political awareness.

Table 4
Male Literacy in English of Selected Castes, 1901–1921
(in percents)

	1901	1911	1921
Tamil Brahman	17.88	22.27	28.21
Telugu Brahman	10.84	14.75	17.37
Indian Christian	2.72	4.41	5.47
Nair	1.54	2.97	4.57
Balija Naidu, Kavarai	.98	2.60	3.43
Vellala	.19	2.12	2.37
Chetti	.15	.98	2.34
Velama	.06	.41	.63
Nadar	.05	.30	.75
Kapu, Reddi	.04	.22	.41
Kamma	.03	.20	.45

SOURCE: India, Census Commissioner, *Census of India: Madras, 1921*, XIII, Pt. 1, 128–129.

Table 5

Graduates of Madras University, 1870–1918

Year	Brahmans 1,315,600*		Non-Brahman Hindus 36,521,000*		Indian Christians 1,167,600*		Muslims 2,824*		Europeans and Eurasians 41,000*		Total Number of Graduates
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
1870–1871	110	67	36	22	10	6	nil		8	5	164
1880–1881	492	64	171	22	47	6	2	.25	58	7.5	770
1890–1891	1,461	67	445	20.5	168	8	20	1	75	3.5	2,169
1901–1911	4,074	71	1,035	18	306	5.3	69	1	225	4	5,709
1918†	10,269	67	3,213	21	1,343	8.8	186	1.2	205	1	15,216

Source: MRO, Public, Ordinary Series, G.O. 22, Jan. 21, 1919.
*Population in 1911; total population of presidency, 41,870,000.
†1918 figures are for those enrolled, *not granted degrees.*

Brahman traditions for literacy and education can be seen most fully from an analysis of the students attending the constituent colleges of the University of Madras (Table 5). Between 1870 and 1918, some 67 to 71 percent of the students enrolled and of those granted Bachelor of Arts degrees by the university were Brahmans. During the same period the number of non-Brahman Hindus awarded B.A.s averaged between 18 and 22 percent of the totals; Indian Christians (in the decade 1901–1911) accounted for 5.3 percent of the B.A.s granted. The Brahmans also led in graduate work. For example, of the 3,651 candidates for the Bachelor of Laws degree, the basic qualification for entry into the legal profession, if not the political world, 2,686 were Brahmans and 752 were non-Brahman Hindus. The proportion was similar for the Licentiate of Teaching degree: 1,094 Brahmans, 163 non-Brahman Hindus, and 207 Indian Christians out of a total of 1,498 degrees granted. Only in the Licentiate of Medical Science were the Brahman candidates exceeded in number by non-Brahman Hindus.[26]

The Madras I.C.S., Brahmans, and Politics

From a very early period of British contact with south India, the Brahmans were suspect as the repository of religious and social power and literate skill. As priests at the head of the social order, the Brahmans were independent of the British. As the possessors of learning, they were more and more indispensable in the government bureaucracy. But their very usefulness and skill aroused mistrust, because they were increasingly in command of large areas of the British administration and therefore in a position to suit their own, rather than British, ends.[27] Thus, long before the start of the non-Brahman movement in the twentieth century, British officials in Madras were more or less fearful of the educated

[26] MRO, Public, Ordinary Series, G.O. 22, Jan. 21, 1919. In those days, Brahmans considered the practice of medicine polluting.

[27] See Frykenberg, *Guntur District, passim.*

Brahman, in whom they saw a potential threat to British supremacy in India. The Collector of Tanjore in 1879 commented frankly on this attitude toward the Brahmans, whom of all Indians in Madras he knew were "unquestionably the foremost, as being the most intellectual":

> The Brahmin intellect (like that of all Orientals) is acute, but I do not see any reason — in the past or present — to believe it is of a high order. They are quibblers with words, not scientific men; their powers of observation are very small, they have hardly any originality, and can see nothing but what immediately concerns them . . . But unfortunately, the Brahmin officials of the present day, with whom a foreigner must come into contact, are very inferior to the old-fashioned Brahmins. Their acuteness, however, in appropriating European Shibboleths has raised them into a position like what Mrs. Mill occupied in J. S. Mill's thoughts . . . Though all his friends knew that she was not the wonderful woman he made her out to be. It will soon be seen that the so-called educated classes are doing and can do, nothing for progress; they are already the commonest weight in native society. There is no class that is so hostile to the English.
>
> It is one great misfortune of our administration that we should have already made such men our masters to a great extent, and that we are going to go to a still farther extent in the same course.[28]

In their hostility toward educated Brahmans, the British I.C.S. officers often mirrored the sentiments of newly organized untouchable groups and spokesmen for the non-Brahman caste Hindus in the presidency. As one non-Brahman writing under the pseudonym "Fair Play" declared, though the British were called the rulers of India, in reality "the Brahman rules it."[29] Many non-

[28] Letter from A. Duvere, Collector of Tanjore, to Sir James Caird, member of the Famine Commission, dated July 8, 1879. Home Miscellaneous Series, 796.

[29] Fair Play, *The Non-Brahmin Races and the Indian Public Service* (Madras, 1893), p. 2. I owe this reference to Professor Stephen N. Hay. See

Brahman caste Hindus as well as untouchables sharply criticized the Indian National Congress for being only the representative of Brahman interests.[30] This coincidence of opinion between the two opposite extremes of the politically aware non-Brahmans and untouchables on the one hand and the British I.C.S. members on the other was to have important political ramifications between 1916 and 1929.

The I.C.S. view of what were the real needs of India was colored by its conception of its own role in Indian affairs at the end of the nineteenth and the early part of the twentieth century.[31] For many members of the I.C.S. the racial superiority of the white man was assumed as a fixed point. Moreover, many I.C.S. officers believed themselves primarily responsible for the affairs of the large landholders and of the rural peasantry, the *ryots*. This assumed responsibility was, of course, not new but was a part of the post-Mutiny discussion as to who should "lead" among the Indian upper classes, and who should "follow."[32] A further important aspect of this I.C.S. notion of their legitimate charge concerned the manner of carrying out their duties. Above all, a district officer was supposed to emphasize personal contact with

also the editorial from *Pariah*, organ of the Pariah [Untouchable] Mahajana Sabha, (founded 1894), cited in the *Madras Mail*, Oct. 25, 1894; quoted in Ramanathan Suntharalingam, "Politics and Change in the Madras Presidency, 1884–1894: A Regional Study of Indian Nationalism," unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, School of Oriental and African Studies, London, 1966, pp. 356–357.

[30] "Fair Play," *Non-Brahmin Races and the Indian Public Service*, p. 1, and the *Pariah* for 1894 quoted in Suntharalingam, "Politics and Change," p. 356. Also see "Fair Play," *The Ways and Means for the Amelioration of the Non-Brahmin Races* (Madras, 1893), p. 65, for a plea to establish a non-Brahman political association.

[31] See the interesting "Memorandum on the Subject of Social and Official Intercourse between European Officers and Indian Gentlemen," by W. O. Horne, MRO, Public, Ordinary Series, G.O. 58, Jan. 18, 1911.

[32] See Thomas R. Metcalf, *The Aftermath of Revolt: India, 1857–1870* (Princeton, 1964), pp. 219–248.

people in the villages; the ability to conduct affairs well at the village level was a mark of an officer's value. With the possible exception of the chairmen of district boards, Madras I.C.S. officers in the latter half of the nineteenth century had little to do with the educated urban politician.

Most political activity in Madras presidency was concentrated in the city of Madras, which, as the center of administrative and educational affairs, quite naturally drew many persons from all over the presidency who wanted professional training or an outlet for their skills and aspirations. But the city of Madras was largely a Tamil city. Telugus from the districts in the Northern Circars looked to various district towns — Guntur, Masulipatam, Rajahmundry, or Cocanada — for the clubs, newspapers, municipal and educational institutions that could answer their literate and professional needs. For educated Telugus, Madras was a hostile city in which Telugu interests were not looked on kindly.[33] This is not to say that Madras city did not contain many Telugus. The great Andhra social reformer, K. Virasalingam, moved to Madras because he felt that it was only there that he could have his books published with sufficient elegance.[34] As can be seen from the Mother-tongue Distribution Map, there were large numbers of Telugus in the Tamil area, and many of them found their way to the Tamil cities of Coimbatore, Madura, Vellore, and Salem. Even before the nineteenth century, numerous Telugu businessmen, mostly Komatis and Beri Chettis, had settled in Madras city, and it was because of them that some of the initial support for the non-Brahman movement came from Telugus resident in Madras city. But Telugus in Madras city often had more to do with the politics of the Tamil districts than with those of Andhra.

It was the Tamils, however, who tended to monopolize the edu-

[33] D. S. Sharma, *From Literature to Religion* (Bombay, 1964), pp. 29–30.

[34] I am indebted to Professor John Leonard for this point and for many other facets of modern south Indian life.

cational facilities and the administrative and political opportunities in Madras. Tamils came from all the Tamil-speaking districts to participate in the public life of the city, for Madras was in many ways a focus for political, social, and journalistic activity, which in the Telugu area was more diffuse.[35] As the home of Madras University and of many important colleges oriented to the needs of Tamils, and to some extent to those of Marathi-speakers from Tanjore and Malayalam-speaking Nairs from Malabar district on the west coast, Madras was the great educational center of south India. It was in Madras that the secretariat of the government was located, and also the High Court with its many auxiliary institutions connected with the legal profession.

Despite the importance of Madras city in public life, united political action did not appear in the presidency until the founding of the Indian National Congress at Bombay in December, 1885. One of the founding members was G. Subramania Iyer, a remarkable Tamil Smartha Brahman. Within a decade and a half, the new Congress had spread throughout India, including Madras, where district conferences in both Tamil and Telugu areas greatly stimulated political interest. But it was the tour of the Bengali political agitator, Bepin Chandra Pal, through Madras presidency in 1907 that did most to enliven the quality and expression of south Indian politics in the early twentieth century. Bepin Chandra aimed his talks particularly at college students and educated people in urban centers, and he was remarkably effective. His speeches evoked opposition from educational authorities and the government, who thought they stirred up disaffection among college students and so threatened the general peace and tranquillity.[36]

[35] An analysis of the relationship between Madras city and the Tamil districts can be found in Gilbert Slater, *Southern India: Its Political and Economic Problems* (London, 1936). S. Muthulakshmi Reddy, *Autobiography* (Madras, 1964), describes the manner in which physicians were drawn to Madras in the early 1900's.

[36] One newspaper called Bepin Chandra's trip to south India "an invasion." See Sharma, *From Literature to Religion*, p. 58. Sharma (pp. 56–59)

Another influence that tended to unite educated elements in Madras presidency against the government was that of the Swadeshi and Terrorist movements. Following the example of nationalist leaders in Bombay and Bengal, a group in Madras, headed by V. O. Chidambaram Pillai, a Vellala, formed the Swadeshi Steam Navigation Company, with offices at Tuticorin, a port city at the southeast tip of the province. As a *swadeshi*, that is, an Indian enterprise, the new company was a deliberate competitor to the British-owned shipping company that had until then monopolized the Ceylon–south India run. Concomitant with the Swadeshi movement was terrorist activity, of the sort that had previously occurred in Bombay, the Punjab, and Bengal. The number of persons involved in terrorist activity in Madras was relatively small, but they worked with the Swadeshi group and were considered responsible for the murder of a district magistrate, Mr. Ashe, who was involved in the harassment of the Swadeshi Steam Navigation Company by its British competitor. Little other violence occurred, however,[37] and the government quickly apprehended those engaged in terrorism, or forced them to flee British India. Several who escaped, including the Tamil poet C. Subramania Bharati, found asylum in the French enclave of Pondicherry, just south of the city of Madras.

One important aspect of political life in Madras presidency was the evolution of social reform activity and its effect on political controversy. In Andhra the extraordinary efforts of the Telugu Brahman Virasalingam had gradually accustomed the Telugus to the importance of social reform, but in the Tamil districts

gives a good account of the disturbances set off by Bepin Chandra in Rajahmundry.

[37] V. K. Narasimhan, *Kasturi Ranga Iyengar* (Delhi, 1963), pp. 59–69, and Great Britain, Parliamentary Papers, Vol. VIII (*Reports from Commissioners, Inspectors, etc.*, Vol. IV), Cd. 9190, October, 1918, "Report of Committee Appointed to Investigate Revolutionary Conspiracies in India," pp. 68–70.

there were no champions of social reform of equal status in society.[38] Much of the social reform activity in Madras city and the Tamil districts was led by Marathi-speaking Brahmans such as K. Srinivasa Rao and R. Raghunath Rao, who seldom had the total support of Tamil Brahmans. At the same time, many attempts at Hindu revivalism were made in Madras city. With the formation of the Hindu Sabha and many other revivalistic organizations, the efforts of the social reformers were largely quashed. Both social reform and revivalistic activity in the Tamil districts assisted in raising non-Brahman caste Hindus to an increased awareness of their social and political position, for both movements sought to define "Aryanism" or "Brahmanism." To non-Brahmans this discussion only suggested the division between the "Aryan Brahman" and the "non-Brahman Dravidian."

In politics, in religion, in government employment, and in education, the division between Brahman and non-Brahman was quite apparent by the first decade of the twentieth century. Edwin Montagu, later to become Secretary of State for India, commented on this when he visited Madras in February, 1913, shortly after the Royal Commission on Public Services held its hearing there concerning the relative strength of Indians in government positions. In his diary he wrote:

> One has here as elsewhere among the majority of the educated Indians, a desire for more power. Not I think for more democracy; for, however horrible it may be for an Englishman of my way of thinking to learn, the clever Indian wants executive power and executive opportunity, but he is not a democrat. If he does not believe in caste, he believes in wealth and division, so acute in Northern India, between the Hindu and Mohammedan, is replaced in Southern India by the vital, almost insurmountable, gulf between Brahmin and non-Brahmin.[39]

[38] See K. Subba Rao, *Revived Memories* (Madras, 1933), pp. 184–201.
[39] Quoted in S. D. Waley, *Edwin Montagu* (Bombay, 1964), p. 328.

The drive for political power, for administrative position, and for economic security had by 1913 produced a serious breach in relations between Brahmans and non-Brahmans.

This breach was greatly exaggerated by Mrs. Annie Besant[40] in the five years following her rise to political prominence in 1914. By then, Mrs. Besant had been in India twenty years. As president of the Theosophical Society since 1907, she had lectured throughout India, often on the glories of the Indian past and on Hinduism. Her revivalistic spirit was condemned by the Madras Social Reform Association, which published the *Indian Social Reformer*, for engendering in the minds of Indians a false sense of pride in their social and political institutions and hence precluding progress in the matter of social and political reform. When she became a champion of Home Rule for India, her Theosophical bias, with its emphasis on the great Brahmanical past of India, quickly brought her into opposition with non-Brahmans and aroused serious social conflict and political dispute.

[40] Mrs. Annie Wood Besant (1847–1933) was born in London of an Irish mother and an Irish-English father. After an unfortunate marriage to an Anglican minister, she became interested in atheism, and in 1874 she joined the National Secular Society. For many years she worked with Charles Bradlaugh, lecturing, writing tracts and articles, championing birth control and women's rights, then socialism (in 1885 she joined the Fabian Society). In 1889, running as a Freethinker, she was elected to the London School Board. That same year she was converted to Theosophy. As a close friend of Mme Helena Blavatsky (d. 1891), she was instrumental in drawing the London lodge of the Theosophical Society into the field of social reform, but during the '90's her principal interest was occultism. See the two-volume biography by Arthur H. Nethercot: *The First Five Lives of Annie Besant* and *The Last Four Lives of Annie Besant* (Chicago, 1960, 1963).

Chapter 2

ANNIE BESANT, HOME RULE, AND NON-BRAHMANISM, 1916-1917

Like many other political leaders in India in the years between the death of the great Indian politician Gopal Krishna Gokhale in 1915 and Gandhi's rise to power in 1920, Mrs. Besant was faced with the dual problem of expressing her own political feelings and of finding a constituency that would listen to her. Her career did not lack its comic moments, and her personality was such that she provoked both profound distrust and extreme devotion. She clashed with the British authorities in Madras, and created a legend for herself by her stubborn resistance to that government. Her most important contribution was that she brought into the open hopes and grievances that were already apparent in the political and social life of the presidency. The Home Rule League which she founded cannot be said to have caused communal discord, but there is no doubt that on some occasions it helped to catalyze it.

Annie Besant in India

Mrs. Besant thrived on activity, and in the years between 1893 and 1907 she was often out of India, pursuing her investigations into the occult, lecturing for the Theosophical Society, or attending meetings. When she was in India, she was occasionally at Adyar, near Madras, where the headquarters of the society were located, but more often in Benares, where, in 1898, she founded the Central Hindu College. She still had an interest in social reform, particularly education for women. For active politics, she appeared to have no inclination whatever. Indeed, she resented the way in

which political agitation disrupted life at the college: "If we are to allow every different part of India," she wrote in 1905, "to send orders to our boys to take part in political demonstrations . . . all discipline would vanish."[1]

In 1907, Colonel Henry Steele Olcott, founder-president of the Theosophical Society, died, designating Mrs. Besant as his successor, and she was elected with no real trouble. For the next five or six years after she became president and moved to Adyar she was preoccupied with the society and with Theosophical matters in general. But in the late summer and autumn of 1913 she gave a series of eight lectures in Madras which together marked the first step toward a full-scale involvement in Indian politics. These lectures (later published under the title *Wake Up, India*) were on the general subjects of India's past and future, including caste, social reform, education for women, and industrial growth. As lectures, they are of no great consequence; they represent no very profound or original understanding of India's problems, and they are in some ways little more than Mrs. Besant's reactions to certain topics then in vogue. But they are interesting as examples of her ideas about India.

She urged Indians to study their own past, where they would find heroes and heroic deeds: "If you know your past you will be proud of being Indians. A nation which gave to humanity not only religion and philosophy, not only literature and drama, but the most splendid warriors, the most deathless loyalty, the most sublime patriotism, that nation can never fade from the page of history except by the treachery of the children of her own womb."[2] In her lecture on caste, given on November 16, she suggested that the caste concept had originated among an Aryan minority which "was in danger of being swamped by the vast majority of mixed population around them." These Aryans were,

[1] Quoted in *Justice*, May 22, 1917 (*Madras NNR, 1917*).
[2] *Madras Mail*, July 30, 1913.

she said, light-skinned, whereas the aborigines were dark and "passed into the ranks of the Sudras."[3] The restrictions imposed by the caste system remained with India, she said, mainly because of indifference and thoughtlessness. It is evident from these lectures that Mrs. Besant was sensitive to the difficulties and limitations imposed by the caste system, though reluctant to go as far as to urge the Indian people to break the sanctions that caste imposed. These were attitudes that laid her open to the charge of hypocrisy; some said that her preaching was inspired not by any genuine interest in Indian social reform but by a desire to maintain the status quo of the caste hierarchy.[4] Like many political and social reformers in India before her, Mrs. Besant saw in Indian village institutions such as *panchayats* a system of indigenous local government which had given Indians many centuries of training in the art of self-government.[5] Nor were her ideas on education and economics any more original; for the most part they followed those propounded by Dadabhai Naraoji and other Moderates in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. But these lectures brought Mrs. Besant out of her Theosophical shell, and signaled a new militancy.

In the spring of 1914 Mrs. Besant again went to England. She gave a speech at Queen's Hall on the subject of India's political needs, and she wrote several letters to newspapers pleading for "justice for India." Her letter to *The Times*, for instance (May 29, 1914), was a concise but impassioned appeal to sensitive Englishmen to grant the educated Indian at least a hearing. "Is he never to be free among free men?" she asked. "Is he never to be estimated by his character, his brain, and his heart, but always by the colour of his skin?" To her way of thinking, India was already politically aware, and she insisted that India's response would

[3] *Ibid.*, Nov. 17, 1913. See also an 1895 lecture, "Eastern Caste and Western Classes," in *The Birth of New India* (Adyar, 1917), pp. 237–257.
[4] *Madras Mail*, Oct. 25, 1913.
[5] *Ibid.*, Nov. 1, 1913.

depend entirely upon the kind of treatment that England gave her. "Free," wrote Mrs. Besant, ". . . [India] will be the buttress of the Empire; subject, she will be a perpetual menace to its stability." She also stressed, as she did in her Queen's Hall speech, the need for a continuing connection between India and Great Britain, and emphasized that political activity in India should be confined to constitutional agitation.

The *Bombay Chronicle*, later to become important in the struggle for Indian independence, noted Mrs. Besant's debut into Indian politics:

> It is not impossible that the entrance of Mrs. Besant into the field of political agitation may prove to be one of the most important events of recent years . . . For many years she has preached Swadeshi as she has understood it. But when, some ten years ago, the Indian advancement movement began to develop in ways which revealed a growing national consciousness, Mrs. Besant came to rank in the main as an opponent, an apologist of officialism, and particularly an enemy of those forms of nationalism which had captured the enthusiasm of Indian youth. Today how different![6]

Mrs. Besant's new stand had already found a medium of expression—the Madras weekly *Commonweal*, which she established following her successful lecture series. In the first issue, of January 2, 1914, she explained why she was entering the publishing field: "The futile efforts made by a small knot of people, using the *Hindu* as their organ, to drive me out of the public work in India to which I have devoted my life, money and work since 1893, have led to the intensification of that work in Madras, and to my greatly increased popularity in South India, where I have hitherto been less known than in the North." *Commonweal* printed articles on political and religious topics by persons in English and Indian public life. On her return from England in late

[6] Quoted in the *Indian Patriot*, July 2, 1914.

June, 1914, Mrs. Besant acquired an English-language daily, the old *Madras Standard*, and renamed it *New India*. The first issue appeared on July 14.

As Mrs. Besant wrote in a *New India* editorial in 1916 (June 8), her purpose in buying the paper was "to press forward the preparation for the coming changes in India, and to claim steadily India's place in the Empire." To facilitate the change in India's status, she advocated two changes in Indian politics. First of all, she wanted the extremists to join the Indian National Congress. This was achieved in December, 1915, partly because of her efforts, partly because of the deaths of the two great political leaders, G. K. Gokhale and Pherozeshah Mehta, and partly because of B. G. Tilak's change of heart.[7] Second—and it was in this sphere that her presence was felt most strongly—she wanted to popularize the doctrine of self-government.[8] In order to implement this second aim, Mrs. Besant began her work for Home Rule.

Mrs. Besant's capacity and desire to organize a Home Rule League were, of course, hampered by her position as a newcomer to the Indian political world, who had only joined the Congress in 1914. It was true that she had had many contacts with politics and politicians in England before her conversion to the doctrines of Mme Blavatsky, but in India her Theosophical asso-

[7] See the interesting narrative in Stanley A. Wolpert, *Tilak and Gokhale: Revolution and Reform in the Making of Modern India* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1962), pp. 265–275.

[8] One of her ideas (recalled from Fabian Society days) was an organization called the Madras Parliament, which she set up in February, 1915, as a means of educating Madras politicians in the conduct of parliamentary affairs. Meetings took the form of mock sessions, at which a "prime minister" and "ministers" were selected, the "government" trying to defend its policy and pass "legislation." Although these sessions were derided by many, including the English-language *Hindu* (Apr. 22, 1915), a number of established Madras politicians as well as men who were to make their mark in ensuing years attended them. Little came of the attempt, however, and Mrs. Besant abandoned the project for other activities.

ciations often made her appear suspect and even ludicrous.[9] The court cases in which she was involved in 1912 and 1913 revealed many unsavory aspects of Theosophy and brought her notoriety but little popularity. Her circle of Indian friends was confined for the most part to Theosophists, many of whom were Tamil Smartha Brahmans, and these associations made her even less attractive to many politicians. Furthermore, her inability to read or speak any Indian language (except for a little Sanskrit) inevitably limited her understanding of Indian institutions and literature. Her notions on the glories of the Indian heritage were partly derivative, partly colored by her Theosophical views on the place of Indian philosophy in a scheme of absolute morality.[10] For her, India was bound by important religious and cultural characteristics; the religious and caste orientations of Indians, she maintained, were so similar that, in fact, India was a single homogenous unit. And influencing all these attitudes was her own vision of what she believed to be her role in the struggle for self-rule. She had few connections with politicians outside Madras, or with all-India politics, and many political figures, including Gokhale, were frankly skeptical of her trying to meddle in affairs she knew little about. Her stands on *swadeshi* and political agitation in the preceding decade had alienated her from many persons in the national movement. In addition to all this, despite her belief in full and free public discussion, she tended herself to be auto-

[9] D. S. Sharma, author of *The Renaissance of Hinduism*, says in his autobiography, on the subject of the lectures given in Adyar by Colonel Olcott and Mrs. Besant: "I listened to them with rapt attention and watched with interest and admiration her every movement and gesture. But somehow, in the end, I felt that the whole atmosphere at Adyar was rather theatrical." D. S. Sharma, *From Literature to Religion*, p. 23.

[10] See Daniel H. H. Ingalls, "The Heritage of a Fallible Saint: Annie Besant's Gifts to India," *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, CIX (Apr. 9, 1965), 85. Ingalls contends that whatever scholarship Mrs. Besant displayed in her translation of the *Bhagavad Gita* and her knowledge of the *Upanishads* and the Yoga Sutras was derived from Jnandra Chatterji, Ganganath Jha, Bhagavan Das, and other Indian scholars.

cratic in her dealings with other politicians; thus she had more than a few personal enemies.

Yet Mrs. Besant knew that she possessed special qualities—including that of oratory—not the least being the fact that as an Englishwoman articulating Indian political demands she was certain to command some attention. The way in which she put these qualities to use was sometimes rather baffling to her Indian contemporaries—and certainly not always to their liking. From the first, the English population in Madras, mostly businessmen and their wives, and the Government of Madras were openly hostile. The government's opposition was due partly to the war, which had dislocated administrative machinery in Madras and elsewhere. It had also brought into operation emergency measures which could be used to muzzle opposition. Mrs. Besant's success in flaunting these emergency regulations accounted for her great popularity among many educated Indians. Instead of silencing her, the government strictures lent to her words and actions a note of even greater authority and daring in Indian eyes.

The Founding of the Home Rule League

The first indications of Mrs. Besant's decision to launch a Home Rule movement appeared in *New India* in September, 1915, while she was in Bombay trying to persuade Dadabhai Naraoji to undertake the presidency of the proposed organization. During the next few months she explained why she was going to introduce English methods of agitation into Indian affairs. Agitation was "the only way of getting rid of the abysmal ignorance in England of Indian affairs." Agitation, and agitation alone, had provoked the British bureaucracy to rescind the Bengal partition: "The Partition went, so will England understand a serious one-pointed agitation for Home-Rule by a political league. *That* means business, and the kind of business with which England is familiar, and with which she, on the whole, is sympathetic."[11]

[11] *New India*, Dec. 16, 1915. Some notion of Annie Besant's style as an

To legitimize her Home Rule League and give it more universal appeal, Mrs. Besant sought the support of the Indian National Congress at its annual meeting at Bombay in December, 1915. But her efforts were opposed by Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya, on the grounds that the league would be a fissiparous organization which would draw off potential loyal workers for Congress. She therefore had to be content with two important resolutions which she was instrumental in getting passed at the meeting. One outlined the type of constitutional reform that the Congress considered satisfactory. The second, and more important, resolution authorized the All-India Congress Committee to draw up a scheme of constitutional reform; in the meantime Congress would carry on a program of "continuous work, educative and propagandist."[12] The second of these two resolutions obviated the need for a Home Rule League, at least until September 1, 1916, when the constitutional scheme commissioned by the Congress was due to be published. However, Mrs. Besant felt that if the scheme was not complete by that date she would be justified in going ahead with her own plans.

Disappointed and piqued by her setback, Mrs. Besant returned to Madras determined to continue her propagandist work. Using the influence that she already had in Madras politics, she pressed for the establishment of educative and propagandist activities by the Madras provincial committee of Congress, and persuaded some of her friends, including C. P. Ramaswami Iyer, a lawyer, and A. Rangaswami Iyengar, an enthusiastic political worker, to give lectures on constitutional topics at the Madras Mahajana Sabha Hall.[13] The lectures attracted some attention, and a number of college students became interested in Home Rule.

agitator can be derived from photographs and cartoons in Nethercot, e.g., *The Last Four Lives of Annie Besant*, facing p. 288.

[12] *New India*, Oct. 11, 1916.

[13] Some of the lectures were published as Home Rule tracts. See A. Rangaswami Iyengar, *Financial Autonomy*, Home Rule Pamphlet No. 7 (Madras, 1916).

Simultaneously, Mrs. Besant increased the tempo and sharpness of her attacks on the British bureaucracy; the Madras government replied by asking her to tone down her language, and then, under the Press Act of 1910, forcing her to pay higher and higher securities on *New India*. This act had originally been used to squash the terrorist newspapers, but it was invoked against Mrs. Besant under the provisions of the wartime Defence of India Act. She did not suffer the strictures lightly, as she made clear in her editorials:

> The Act was meant to strike at treason; it strikes me, and I am branded as a traitor. I repel these monstrous accusations made against me; never a word of violence, or treason, of sedition, has stained these pages. To the King-Emperor I am utterly loyal, and still believe in the value of the connection between England and India. I feel insulted at being herded with traitors and assassins and seditionists, and so long as this security is imposed on me, so long this insult remains.[14]

The public quickly rallied to her side. Meetings were held to protest the use of the act against her. Mrs. Besant had already grasped the effectiveness of striking political poses as a way of communicating her ideas and gaining political applause. Occasionally, she became rather theatrical, as when she compared herself to Luther standing in judgment before the Church authorities at Worms: "If the Government are determined to crush the paper and myself because I carry on a perfectly legitimate agitation, they have the power to gain a momentary victory, but history will judge them," she wrote in *New India* on June 8, 1916. Thus when her agitation in the summer of 1916 seemed to be working, she pressed for her league. And on September 3 of that year the Home Rule League was at last a reality. From Mrs. Besant's point of view, its formation was implicitly permitted under the resolutions passed at the 1915 Bombay Congress session, since the All-India

[14] *New India*, June 13, 1916.

Congress Committee and the Muslim League had failed to issue their Congress-League Scheme (as it was later called) by the September 1 deadline.

Mrs. Besant at once turned her whole effort, and money, to expanding the league in district centers throughout the presidency and making its purpose known by a spate of literature. Though most of this pamphlet literature was written in English, a number of short tracts and booklets, including some with patriotic songs, were published in Tamil. The tracts were on such subjects as "Self-Government Under British Suzerainty," outlining the kind of constitutional innovation sought by the league. The prices were nominal, so as to make distribution as wide as possible.

In using vernacular tracts for political purposes Mrs. Besant was following a practice that had been established in a very limited way in the last decades of the nineteenth century. S. Kasturi Ranga Iyengar, a Tamil Sri Vaishnava Brahman who was editor of the English-language newspaper *Hindu*, had as early as February, 1906, complained that Englishmen in India thought of politics as the prerogative solely of the English-educated classes — schoolmasters, lawyers, journalists — and had suggested that if Congress were to be important in the life of the presidency, provincial meetings and branches should be encouraged to carry on their proceedings in Tamil or Telugu, since it would be only through a more intense mass contact that Congress could have any steady and permanent effect.[15] Mrs. Besant took up his idea, and when Dr. P. Varadarajulu Naidu lectured on Home Rule in 1917 in North Arcot district, he spoke entirely in Tamil.[16] His lectures drew large crowds; for the first time, perhaps, to many non-English speakers, he was making available the content and participation of politics. In the decade after the inauguration of

[15] *Hindu*, Feb. 13, 1906, quoted in V. K. Narasimhan, *Kasturi Ranga Iyengar*, pp. 42–43.

[16] *New India*, July 23, 1917.

the Home Rule League, Varadarajulu Naidu and other politicians used the vernacular with much success.

Mrs. Besant, meanwhile, was stoutly resisting the authorities and championing Home Rule in *New India.* She was obliged to forfeit large sums of money in securities, and she was externed from Bombay, then from the Central Provinces and Bihar; but she did not stop her attacks on the government. Finally, the government lost patience, and on June 16, 1917, it issued an order forbidding her and two other officers in the Home Rule League, B. P. Wadia (assistant editor of *New India*) and George Arundale, from participating in politics, whether in speeches or in writing, and confining their movements to six specified areas safely remote from Madras city.

News of the order caused much excitement in Madras city and the district towns. Indeed, by suppressing Mrs. Besant's activities, the government, however unintentionally, furthered her cause a good deal more than she had been able to do herself, even when she printed pamphlets in Tamil. Even the semi-literate now knew her name and her cause. As Mrs. Besant herself put it, "The long fight made good propaganda, and helped Home Rule immensely."[17]

Not everyone approved of Mrs. Besant's methods and aims, but she had undeniably aroused the political awareness of the Madras people. For the first time, many educated persons were seriously asking questions about the future of India: who would have the political power in an independent India, and what would be the role of the minorities? Throughout 1917, in the press and in political meetings, these questions were debated. Inevitably, there were many who, for one reason or another, were seemingly more interested in opposing Mrs. Besant than in answering the ques-

[17] Annie Besant, *The Future of Indian Politics* (Adyar, 1922), p. 125. A good photograph of the trio in internment at Ootacamund in the Nilgiri Hills, can be found in Nethercot, *The Last Four Lives of Annie Besant,* facing p. 320.

tions and working out a plan. Some leading Congress members, annoyed by her heavy-handedness, challenged her capacity as a political leader. In one Madras provincial conference, for instance, a long argument broke out between Mrs. Besant and P. Kesava Pillai, a charter member of the Indian National Congress, over the question of whether or not the depressed classes should be represented in the future constitution by nomination or by election. Mrs. Besant's intransigence at this meeting (where she demanded that 100 percent of the future council membership should be elected) prompted C. Karunakaran Menon, editor of the *Indian Patriot,* to comment on her "stupendous" ignorance of India.[18] Kesava Pillai thought that she had "at best a second-hand knowledge of Indian conditions"; he admired her "youthful enthusiasm" but thought that she "as a leader of a party of *Home Rulers under the Congress* flag, will do well to abstain from speaking of the 'the campaign,' of 'the tactics' and 'injustice' etc."[19]

Opposition to Mrs. Besant: The Andhras and Non-Brahmans

Irritation at Mrs. Besant's methods and aims was not confined to isolated individuals but found expression among groups which, even before Mrs. Besant had made her appearance on the south Indian political stage, had a measure of organizational coherence. One of these groups, led predominantly by Telugu Brahmans from Andhra, feared that in the reallocation of political authority accompanying the introduction of Home Rule the rights and the interests of the Telugus would not find their proper place. The Andhra group, which had first organized at Bapatla, in Guntur district, in May, 1913, aimed to establish a separate Telugu unit or "circle" of Congress so as to give the Telugus freedom of action and reduce the influence of the Tamils in Andhra affairs. Beyond that, it hoped in time to use the new Telugu Congress as a means of achieving a separate Telugu province, with a university for Telugus.

[18] *Indian Patriot,* Sept. 1, 1916 (*Madras NNR, 1916*).
[19] *New India,* May 19 and 24, 1916.

The pressure of the group on the Congress party, including publication of a pamphlet on the subject, was successful, and on April 8, 1917, Congress granted permission for the establishment of a Telugu unit. The authors of the pamphlet, Konda Venkatappayya and Pattabhi Sittaramayya, stated Andhra's case clearly: "The clear sketch [stretch] of continuous territory, a common language and literature, common traditions of heroes and poets, warriors and kings, and deep down a strong similarity of temper and character—these language-bound communities are to be outlined each into a single race and accorded all those accessories of communal and political institutions which illustrate and feed that unity."[20] Mrs. Besant and some of her "Tamil friends from the South" had opposed the Telugus proposal at the 1916 Congress *session;*[21] *furthermore, the Home Rule scheme did not put much* emphasis on the division of India according to linguistic affinities.[22] For these reasons, many Andhras were cool toward Mrs. Besant and her ideas, and her popularity in Telugu districts generally was a good deal less than it was in Tamil districts.

Inadvertently, however, Mrs. Besant's stand on a homogeneous versus a linguistically divided India helped to intensify certain already existing trends in Andhra. Telugu had been used to some extent in political meetings since the 1870's; from the start of the Andhra movement in 1913, political meetings in the Telugu districts were conducted exclusively in Telugu,[23] thus effectively barring non-Telugu speakers from participating. Mrs Besant's known associations with Tamil politicians hardly gave her a ready introduction to Telugu politics, since Tamils not only were unwelcome but also were incapable of interfering.

Still another factor that accompanied the mobilization of opin-

[20] Standing Committee of the Andhra Conference, "The Reorganization of Indian Provinces," *Commonweal*, Oct. 6, 1916, p. 264.

[21] See B. Pattabhi Sittaramayya, *The History of the Indian National Congress* (Madras, 1935), I, 251.

[22] See *New India*, May 8, 1916.

[23] Konda Venkatappayya, *The Andhra Movement* (Madras, n.d.), p. 20.

ion for an Andhra province was the development of an articulate Telugu press. Apart from the Telugu papers begun in the 1880's and several important literary journals, the most important innovation in Telugu political publishing was the founding of the *Andhra Patrika* in Bombay in 1908; in 1914 it was moved to Madras. Other Telugu papers such as the *Deshabhimani*, published in Guntur, and the *Krishna Patrika*, published in Masulipatam, helped to spread the views of the Telugu leaders, who complained of the anti-Telugu bias of the English-language *Hindu*.[24]

The validity of an appeal to former greatness and cultural distinctiveness on the part of the Andhras implied the possibility of other language groups claiming the same regional or linguistic uniqueness and political cohesion. It was a claim that was bound to arise, since, as Pattabhi Sittaramayya wrote in 1913, "the day is not far off when the Indians themselves will be responsibly associated with the full work of administration.[25] If Home Rule were granted, what parts would the Telugus and the Tamilians play in the future administration of Madras presidency? This question, and many others raised by the Home Rule agitation, had implications not only for linguistic groups but also for caste groups which, not for the first time, sought a more substantial place in the political, educational, and administrative framework of the presidency.

"'The Telugu districts for the Telugus,'" wrote Kesava Pillai in 1913, "is a good cry, to catch the fancy of some people in the Telugu province. But what about the skeleton in the cupboard, the feeling of the Brahmins vs. the non-Brahmins."[26] K. Srinivasa

[24] *New India*, Feb. 10, 1916. It was only on November 26, 1921, that T. Prakasam, an important Andhra Brahman politician, established an English-language paper, the *Swarajya*, to voice Andhra claims in Madras. Interview with N. V. L. Narasimhan.

[25] *For and Against the Andhra Province* (Masulipatam, 1913), p. 53.

[26] *Ibid.*, p. 106.

Rau (himself a Desastha Brahman, a Marathi-speaker from Tanjore district) had for many years contended that India could not hope to develop politically until it closed the all too evident divisions in its society. In a book entitled *The Present Political Unrest in India* (1908) he wrote: "Unless the ground is cleared, the rocks and stones removed, the basis of National life broadened and deepened, and the centre of life and interests changed from persons to principles, and divergent sects, classes and creeds to the country at large, and unless our political sympathies go forth, from the pale of Iyers, Iyengars and Raus, to wider circles of men . . . transcending Brahman and non-Brahman . . . democracy on any large scale will be a danger, delusion and sham."[27] Srinivasa Rau's interest in "the intimate connection between our Social and Political advance" led him in 1911 to write his major work, *Crisis in India* (published in a second edition in 1918). In this book, which takes the form of a conversation between an Indian and an Englishman about the political condition of India, particularly Madras, the Indian, Ramdoss, defines the kind of loyalties that complicate Indian politics: "But if you use instead the names of the particular divisions of Hindus, you touch a chord of each division. If you allude to the 'Brahman,' you have touched a chord, though here again, you have to remember how much feeling is attenuated by the numerous divisions of Brahmans, and so, the general name 'Indian' is unmeaning and vague. If you particularise 'The Brahman' through his divisions, you touch a deeper chord."[28] Srinivasa Rau's insistence upon the divisions within India, particularly between Brahman and non-Brahman, was offensive to some people, including many Brahmans, who argued that the divisions were more apparent than real or were, at any rate, irrelevant to politics. The *Hindu* was

[27] *The Present Political Unrest in India, Its Causes and Cure* (Madras, 1908), p. 81. Iyer, Iyengar, and Rau are common Brahman surnames in the Tamil and Telugu areas, indicative of Brahman prestige.

[28] K. Srinivasa Rau, *The Crisis in India* (Madras, 1911), pp. v, 18.

especially hostile, and criticized him for going beyond propriety as a district sessions judge by entering the political arena.[29]

Another prominent south Indian, C. Sankaran Nair, also deplored the deep fissures in south Indian society. In one lecture in 1909 he declared that India was beginning to realize that nationalism was "an impossible drain so long as the caste system stands in the way."[30] The Brahmans, he said, were responsible for the caste system and maintained it rigidly in order to prevent the lower castes from rising in status. Any Brahman who entered public life brought with him "his Brahmana ideas, his philosophy after death, and Maya, which were out of place there." As a result of Brahman dominance, other classes were becoming unfit to accept political responsibility.[31]

The extent to which the Brahmans controlled the administrative framework of the presidency was clearly proved by the hearings of the Royal Commission on Public Services in Madras in 1913. The evidence presented to the Commission by the Madras government and by witnesses on the recruitment, salary, and position of non-Europeans in the Provincial and Indian Civil Services[32] demonstrated conclusively the disproportionately large number of posts in the Madras government services held by Brahmans. As we have seen, the English were themselves wary of the Brahmans, though dependent upon them, and thought they were in many ways opposed to Western ideals. At the hearings, it emerged that at least some non-Brahmans were of the

[29] *Hindu* (weekly ed.) Mar. 22, 1918. See also *Some Letters and Opinions about K. Srinivasa Rau* (Guntur, 1918).

[30] C. Sankaran Nair, *Two Notable Lectures*, ed. C. Krishnan (Calicut, 1910), p. 39.

[31] *New India*, Feb. 13, 1915. For an uncritical sketch of Sankaran Nair's life, see C. Madhavan Nair, *A Short Life of Sir C. Sankaran Nair* (Madras, n.d.).

[32] MRO, Public, Ordinary Series, G.O. 224, Feb. 14, 1913: Letter from H. Wheeler, Secretary, Home Department, Government of India, to Chief Secretary, Govt. of Madras, Sept. 3, 1912.

same opinion. One Indian Christian, A. M. Kumaraswami Tampoe, a member of the I.C.S., made the following statement to the Commission:

> The caste which is most averse to breaking through the trammels of the present social system in India, is naturally the one on which the system has conferred the greatest privileges. The Brahman has been for thousands of years the custodian and object of all intellectual culture, and the other castes have in consequence been placed in a very disadvantageous position intellectually. But the very social conditions which give the Brahman this advantage have *pari passu* handicapped him in his ability and desire to absorb democratic ideas on social matters. He is far less able than we are to take advantage of the educational opportunities offered by institutions which are purely European, and which are in consequence inconsistent with the fundamental principles of caste.[33]

Tampoe, later to become a member of the non-Brahman Justice Party, went on to suggest that Brahman efficiency should be sacrificed for the sake of a more general recruitment policy so that a large number of non-Brahmans could find a place in government service.

Tampoe's evidence as well as that of other witnesses who supported his contentions appeared daily in the Madras papers and aroused considerable interest."[34] In August, 1913, the *Malayali* carried an editorial condemning the dominance of the Brahmans in political life and urging non-Brahmans to organize an opposition. Specifically, the editorial objected to the appointment of L. A. Govindaraghava Iyer, a Tamil Smartha Brahman (a good friend of Mrs. Besant's and later a member of the Home Rule

[33] Great Britain, Parliamentary Papers, Vol. XXI (*Reports from Commissioners, Inspectors, etc.*, Vol. XI), Cd. 7293, 1914, "Royal Commission on the Public Services in India. Appendix, Vol. II: Minutes of evidence relating to the Indian and Provincial Civil services taken in Madras," p. 359.

[34] See the statements in *Krishna Patrika*, Feb. 22, 1913, and *Hindu*, Jan. 20, 1913 (*Madras NNR, 1913*).

League) as chairman of the reception committee of the forthcoming Madras session of the Indian National Congress. Govindaraghava Iyer's choice of five Brahmans and five non-Brahmans for his committee was, the *Malayali* said, the kind of sectarian selection that was unrepresentative of the people of India generally. The non-Brahmans, like the Muslims, should "form their own organizations for representations of their own interests as against those of any particular caste or class. The Muhammadans have lost nothing through their separatist activities."[35]

Creation of the Justice Party

Fear of a Brahman take-over of political power, should Mrs. Besant succeed in her Home Rule endeavors, set off a series of reactions which culminated in the formation of a non-Brahman party to challenge her moves. Here again, as in the case of the Andhra movement, Mrs. Besant exacerbated sensibilities and tendencies that had existed long before she turned to politics. Her inability to contend with this opposition—whether from the Telugus or from the non-Brahmans—resulted from her misunderstandings about the structure of south Indian society. She was in part a victim of the personal associations she had built in her Theosophical work. Her associates were almost all Brahmans, and many of the assumptions that she articulated about Indian culture were based on the *Puranas*, *Manu*, and the epics—works whose value many educated non-Brahmans were already questioning, since they suspected them to be the work of Brahmans.

By 1916, signs of non-Brahman distrust of Brahman intentions in south Indian politics were beginning to appear in numerous letters to the daily press. Some of the distrust was perhaps exaggerated, some was based on personal grievances. One writer from South Arcot district, for instance, argued that "the Brahmin *vs* non-Brahmin hatred is found supreme in every Taluk."[36] An-

[35] *Malayali*, Aug. 1, 1913 (*Madras NNR, 1913*).
[36] *Madras Mail*, Sept. 23, 1916.

other non-Brahman described an experience in Madura where he and some Brahmans were to celebrate the granting of an honorary Rao Bahadur to a friend by having a festive meal, and found to their surprise that the club to which they went had placed the Brahmans and non-Brahmans at separate tables one hundred yards apart. "If," he asked, "so little sympathy and fellowship is shown by Brahmanas to non-Brahmans, who form the bulk of the population, and if those qualities carry with them a certain amount of contempt, how can the Brahmanas, who are . . . responsible for the clamour for Home Rule and self-Government, be expected to sympathise with their despised compatriots and legislate in their favour."[37]

More practically, there were several moves to organize non-Brahmans in the city of Madras. C. Natesa Mudaliar, a Vellala medical student who was secretary of the Madras Dravidian Association (an organization dating from 1912), began gathering funds for the establishment of a hostel in Madras city for "non-Brahmana youths who desire to receive their education from the schools and colleges of this City."[38] Many non-Brahmans eager to enhance the position of their caste groups in the educational hierarchy of the presidency had long felt the need of some sort of hostel which could mitigate the effects of the "bad company, evil surroundings and lack of efficient supervision" that had resulted in so many academic failures among non-Brahman boys. The establishment of the Dravidian Association hostel, in June, 1916, was the first practical step of a small but important group of non-Brahmans in Madras to organize themselves.

Until then, the Dravidian Association, with few funds and little influence, had limited its activities to the publishing of two books: *Sir C. Sankaran Nair*, the first volume of a projected series on "Dravidian Worthies," and *Non-Brahmin Letters*, both of which appeared in 1915. The books were published by one of Mrs.

[37] *New India*, Feb. 24, 1916. [38] *Ibid.*, June 1, 1916.

Besant's chief opponents, C. Karunakaran Menon, formerly on the staff of the *Hindu* and now editor of the *Indian Patriot*. Karunakaran Menon was unhappy over the decline in circulation of his paper owing to the popularity of Mrs. Besant's *New India*, and he thought she was causing much discontent and division in the Congress, where her demands produced in her followers a "remarkable intellectual prostration."[39] Mrs. Besant was incapable of seeing that her position in politics was "quite different from her position in the Theosophical Society," he said: "She has absolutely no claim upon us; she has no right to expect us to follow her. She came into our politics only yesterday. The editor of the *Indian Patriot* has been in public life for nearly thirty years . . . She is after all an Irish woman whom nobody beyond her Theosophical Society is bound to revere; and her claim to lead the whole of India setting aside all old leaders and public workers is most preposterous."[40]

Non-Brahmin Letters,[41] the more important of the two Dravidian Association publications, is a series of twenty-one letters concerning the position, and the desires, of certain non-Brahman caste groups in Madras presidency—many of which were to become the principal aims of the non-Brahman movement. The letters are addressed to "Dear Govindarajulu" and "Dear Ramaswami" from "Reddy," "Naidu," and "Mudaliar" (that is, from a Kapu, a Balija, and a Vellala), and are intended to reflect the heart-searchings of these caste groups about their lowly position in public affairs. They emphasize that non-Brahmans are disunited and jealous of one another, that they are unwilling to take advantage of education but instead remain attached to their traditional occupations as businessmen or *dubashes* (translators or clerks). Non-Brahmans are badly treated by non-Brahman

[39] *Indian Patriot*, Sept. 8 and Aug. 21, 1916 (*Madras NNR, 1916*).
[40] *Ibid.*, June 14 and May 30, 1916 (*Madras NNR, 1916*).
[41] The author is one S. K. N. I have been unable to determine his identity.

employers and Brahman fellow-workers alike, but they themselves are to blame for not aspiring to influential positions in the government service. Unlike the Brahmans, who act in concert and realize the importance of education, non-Brahmans, mesmerized by the strictures of Manu, are the victims of their own sense of inferiority. If they are ever to become important in the public life of Madras presidency, they must organize a movement to unite the Dravidians and must establish a "national" college employing the Dravidian vernaculars.

Following the publication of *Non-Brahmin Letters*, successful attempts were made by Natesa Mudaliar, the secretary of the Madras Dravidian Association, to reconcile two non-Brahman leaders who were both important figures in Madras city affairs, Dr. T. M. Nair and P. Tyagaraja Chetti, a Telugu Beri Chetti. These two men were at odds over a municipal problem of sewage disposal in the north Madras suburb of Tondiarpet, where Tyagaraja Chetti lived.[42] Natesa Mudaliar prevailed upon them to forget their petty differences and help him form a non-Brahman party. After Dr. Nair suffered two election defeats in the summer of 1916 at the hands of Brahmans, he decided to cooperate with Natesa Mudaliar.[43]

Finally, on November 20, 1916, some thirty or so non-Brahman leaders, including Dr. Nair and Tyagaraja Chetti, met at the Victoria Public Hall in Madras city. This meeting can be considered the real beginning of a non-Brahman party, although the decision that night was simply to form a joint stock company, to be called the South Indian People's Association, Ltd., for the purpose of publishing English, Telugu, and Tamil newspapers to voice non-Brahman grievances.[44] At first, the new party had

[42] Interview with S. G. Manavala Ramanujam.

[43] One election was for the Madras Legislative Council, the other for the Imperial Legislative Council in Delhi. The Madras Council defeat particularly rankled, as he h[illegible]n promised the support of a substantial number of Brahmans in the Madras Corporation, which elected one Council member.

[44] Interview with S. G. Manavala Ramanujam.

little organizational cohesion or direction, but as Dr. Nair pointed out a few days after the initial meeting, non-Brahmans had never before united for corporate action. Only by working together would they ever take their "proper place" in the government of the country. He urged a policy of nonviolence, with leadership in the hands of the landed aristocracy.[45]

On December 20, in both the *Hindu* and in Mrs. Besant's *New India*, the group made its public announcement, in the form of a "Non-Brahmin Manifesto."[46] In addition to the joint stock company, there was now an organization called the South Indian Liberal Federation (S.I.L.F.), whose purpose was to promote the political interests of non-Brahman caste Hindus. The tone of the manifesto was more militant than previous statements, in direct opposition to Home Rule agitation. "The time has come," the manifesto began, "when an attempt should be made to define the attitude of the several important non-Brahmin Indian communities in this Presidency toward what is called "the Indian Home Rule Movement,'" for clearly, if no one disagreed, it would be assumed that all of India was in favor of Home Rule. But non-Brahmans could never support any measure that, "in operation, is designed, or tends completely, to undermine the influence and authority of the British Rulers, who alone in the present circumstances of India are able to hold the scales even between creed and class and to develop that sense of unity and national solidarity without which India will continue to be a congeries of mutually exclusive and warring groups without a common purpose and a common patriotism." The manifesto went on to say that, though the Brahmans had given Home Rule agitation an apparent unanimity, they in truth represented only a small minority, which had everything to gain by Home Rule since it held nearly all the available government posts open to Indians and had a majority of the seats in the Madras Legislative Council.

[45] *Madras Mail*, Nov. 27, 1916.
[46] See appendix 1 for the full text of the manifesto.

Some non-Brahman groups, the manifesto noted, such as the Chettis, Komatis, Mudaliars (Vellalas), and Naidus (Balijas), "have been making rapid progress." But these groups had so far been "groping helplessly" in the background, "because of the subtle and manifold ways in which political power and official influence are often exercised by the Brahmin caste." The Indian National Congress, though it spoke for the whole of India, in fact represented only the views of the Brahman minority. Therefore non-Brahmans must organize if they were to have any influence when postwar reforms were put into effect.

The day after the manifesto appeared, *New India*, true to Mrs. Besant's ideas, objected that the statement showed distrust in the ultimate objective of independence. As long as India gained Home Rule, it said, it mattered little whether Brahmans or non-Brahmans, Hindus or Muslims were most powerful, for, after all, "we are all children of one Mother." Mrs. Besant's blindness to the possibility of sectional claims in the event of self-rule prevented her from realizing that by this time the question of who would hold the reins of power, Brahmans or non-Brahmans, was developing into an issue of major importance in Madras politics.

It was also evident that Mrs. Besant now had some opponents who would combine their energies against her. Tyagaraja Chetti was the editor of the recently founded English-language weekly, the *Non-Brahman*. Dr. Nair, though primarily a physician, had for some years edited a medical journal called *Antiseptic*; but he did not limit his writing to medical subjects.[47] One article, in fact, brought him into protracted conflict with Mrs. Besant. It was called "Psychopathia sexualis in a Mahatma" and concerned the sexual practices of Charles W. Leadbeater with his disciples (*chela* was the T.S. term) in the Theosophical Society. Leadbeater, a

[47] Typical of his medical works are "Etiology of Leprosy: Fish Hypothesis and Its Fallacies," in *Antiseptic* (1903), and *Diabetes: Its Nature and Treatment; What Diabetic Patients Ought to Know* (Madras, 1914).

former minister and a Theosophist since Mrs. Besant's London days, had resigned from the society in 1906 after charges were brought against him by the parents of a young American boy who accompanied him on one of his tours of the United States. Two years later he was reinstated, however, and around 1909, after certain intensive occult experiments, he and Mrs. Besant brought forward a young Brahman boy named Jiddu Krishnamurti as the Vehicle for the next Messiah. Dr. Nair's article was picked up and elaborated upon in the *Hindu*. To make matters worse, the father of Krishnamurti (now safely in Europe with his brother) brought suit against Mrs. Besant and the society for the recovery of his children. The sensational case was transferred to the High Court in Madras in 1913.[48] Then Mrs. Besant brought suit against Dr. Nair and his publisher for defamation.[49] The court ruled in the defendants' favor,[50] but Dr. Nair, from his *Antiseptic* article on, never lost an opportunity to embarrass Mrs. Besant, whom he characterized as a "woman of deep penetration, quick conception, and easy delivery."[51]

Mrs. Besant's leadership of the Home Rule movement was a

[48] For a good description of these episodes, see Nethercot, *The Last Four Lives of Annie Besant,* pp. 91–98 and 155–201. A bibliography can be found in John N. Farquar, *Modern Religious Movements in India* (London, 1929), pp. 271–278, 291. The entire correspondence between Mrs. Besant and Charles Leadbeater appears in T. M. Nair, *The Evolution of Annie Besant* (Madras, 1918).

[49] Mrs. Besant wrote with feeling about Dr. Nair's attack: "It may be, as I am old, that they [Nair and his publisher, Rama Rao] may not discover their mistake until the fire has consumed this body. So, as I am not likely again to write upon this subject, I say while still the sting of injustice is keen: 'I forgive.'" See Annie Besant, *Dr. Nair and Annie Besant* (Adyar, 1913), p. vii.

[50] The decision in the Narayaniah case was less one-sided: the children were to be returned to their father, but he was to pay all court costs. Mrs. Besant fought the judgment, and the case was ultimately dismissed by the Privy Council in London.

[51] Quoted in K. P. S. Menon, *Many Worlds: An Autobiography* (London, 1965), p. 43.

particularly good target, and after Karunakaran Menon declined the editorship of a new English-language newspaper for the S.I.L.F.,[52] Dr. Nair decided to take on the job himself. The first issue of the daily, called *Justice*, was issued on February 26, 1917. A second daily, the *Dravidan*, printed in Tamil, was also begun in mid-1917, edited by N. Bhaktavatsalam Pillai. For Telugu readers, the South Indian People's Association acquired a well-established Telugu paper (founded in 1885), the *Andhra Prakasika*. Its editor was A. C. Parthasarathi Naidu. Funds for the support of the newspapers and for the activities of the S.I.L.F. were collected among the landed interests of the presidency, and within a year of its establishment the Justice Party, as the S.I.L.F. came to be known after the name of its English-language newspaper, was backed by at least Rs. 100,000.

Mrs. Besant was now being attacked almost daily by three Justice Party papers. The *Dravidan* printed headlines like "Home Rule Is Brahmana's Rule." Pamphlets appeared questioning her integrity and that of her Brahman colleagues. One pamphlet mocked her attempts at social reform by remarking that she refused to introduce interdining in the organizations she sponsored because she regarded the Sudras as mere "younger brothers." And her Brahman friends, the pamphlet said, were unwilling to give up the "selfish advantages of caste." In fact, the interests of Brahmans and non-Brahmans could never be the same, it declared: "It is a misrepresentation to say that Brahmins belong to the same Indian nation as the non-Brahmins while the English

[52] He explained that his loyalties lay with the Congress, and that the non-Brahman cause was best served there. Writing on the subject two years later, he commented: "It should have been quite enough if the non-Brahmins had claimed their privileges in the same manner as the Muhammadans did. The Muhammadans avoided the mistake of joining hands with the extreme sections of Europeans in India. They merely asserted their individuality without questioning the claims of the country for political reform. The Muhammadans have got what they wanted without injuring the interest of the country." *Hindu* (weekly ed.), July 3, 1919.

are aliens . . . Indian Brahmins are more alien to us than Englishmen."[53] The *Non-Brahman* accused Mrs. Besant of having herself fomented the non-Brahman movement by identifying herself with Brahmans and by "attacking us incessantly."[54] In a series of articles published in *Justice* and later printed as a book, Dr. Nair contended that Mrs. Besant's program suited the Brahmans well: they would reap the rewards of an agitation carried on by a "white woman particularly immune from the risks of Government action,"[55] and in fact they were using the Home Rule movement to further their own ends and ensure the continuation of their power under a new constitution. The non-Brahmans, who had no chance of gaining prestige and position under the Brahmans, were against Home Rule, Dr. Nair said, "because we are not ready for it."[56]

Along with the journalistic barrage, the Justice Party began holding conferences to set up branches throughout the presidency. The first and one of the most important of these conferences was organized in Coimbatore by two party members, T. A. Ramalingam Chettiar and S. A. Somasundaram Pillai, a Vellala. Plans were announced months in advance: by intent, the conference was scheduled for the same days as a previously announced Congress conference to be held in Coimbatore on August 19 and 20, 1917. Then Ramalingam Chettiar, who was also a member of the Congress, astonished everyone by asking that his name be stricken from the Congress reception committee and demanding also that all persons attending the Congress conference be asked to sign a statement affirming that the aim of the Congress would be to attain self-government only by gradual steps and further agreeing that all representative bodies in the future

[53] Kallat Raghavan, *Home Rule and Caste* (Calicut, 1917), pp. 3–4, 13, 9.

[54] *Non-Brahman*, May 6, 1917 (*Madras NNR, 1917*).

[55] Nair, *The Evolution of Annie Besant*, pp. 324–325.

[56] T. M. Nair speaking to the Muthialpet Muslim Anjuman, as quoted in T. Varadarajulu Naidu (comp.), *The Justice Movement, 1917* (Madras, 1932), p. 17.

should contain the proper proportion of "all communities and interests." Many Congress members in Coimbatore refused to sign, and the division in the ranks was complicated by organizational confusion which resulted in a series of noisy meetings.[57] At last, out of all the confusion, some agreement was reached: the Congress conference would proceed as scheduled, and Mrs. Besant, still interned in an Ootacamund bungalow, would be asked to preside. Against this background of "intense activity" both the Congress and Justice party conferences met in Coimbatore.[58]

In London, on the same day, August 20, 1917, Edwin Montagu, Secretary of State for India, made an announcement in the House of Commons which was to harden and exaggerate the differences in Madras presidency politics: "The policy of His Majesty's Government," he said, "with which the Government of India are in complete accord, is that of the increasing association of Indians in every branch of the administration, and the general development of self-government institutions, with a view to the progressive realisation of responsible government in India as an integral part of the British Empire."[59] Discussion about the political future of India had been underway in Madras for at least five years; the lines of conflict were already drawn, and the hostilities had already broken out. Montagu's announcement, long expected but delayed by events, did not begin political and communal tension in Madras presidency but rather intensified it, and gave a new urgency to the demands that were being drawn up. The most important question was that of political enfranchisement and the amount of responsibility that would be granted the Indians. Some hoped for a direct transfer of power; others, perhaps more realistic, expected

[57] See *New India*, May 22, 1917.

[58] "The Coimbatore Conference," Varadarajulu Naidu, *Justice Movement, 1917*, Section II, p. 1.

[59] Great Britain, 5 *Parliamentary Debates* (Commons), XCVII (1917), 1695. On the timing of the announcement, see the article by S. R. Mehrotra, "The Politics Behind the Montagu Declaration of 1917," in C. H. Philips (ed.), *Politics and Society in India* (London, 1963), pp. 71–96.

much more limited reforms, based on the principle of representation by "interest," given currency by the Morley-Minto reforms of 1909. But all groups in Madras at least agreed that only by making themselves heard would they obtain a share in the responsibilities to which Montagu referred.

From Mrs. Besant's social reform lectures in late 1913 until Montagu's announcement in Parliament in 1917, Madras had been the center of Home Rule agitation. A few of Mrs. Besant's experiments, like the Madras Parliament, seem naïve, but her triumphs were many, and if she had enemies she also had followers, many of whom learned a lesson from her anti-government stand. If Mrs. Besant had been politically astute, she would have realized that her enemies were soon to be more powerful than her friends; but she was not alone in her blindness. The Tamil Brahmans had for so long been powerful in Madras that it was hard to believe that the disorganized masses of non-Brahman caste Hindus would ever pull together and achieve, as they finally did, a reserved place in the 1920 Legislative Council in Madras. In the following three chapters we shall see how they managed to secure their demands.

Chapter 3

GRANTING THE REFORMS: THE FIGHT IN INDIA, 1917-1918

When Montagu made his announcement in Parliament on August 20, 1917, Madras political interests were in many respects already mobilized. Furthermore, the constitutional discussion that had preceded the announcement had created a large number of political spokesmen and journals. But Montagu's statement intensified activity in the Madras political arena because it, like Mrs. Besant's demand for Home Rule, posed the possibility of the transfer of power. Montagu's statement was more important than any demand by an Indian political leader because it was a statement of government policy; hence, political leaders in India understood that now was the time when they must press their claims for power under the new constitutional system. As political discussion became intensified, signs of division began to appear among the non-Brahmans in Madras, between those in the Justice Party and those in Congress, each section demanding that it could best represent the majority of the population of the province. The English in Madras, especially those in the business community, were hostile to the announcement, in that it implied the most serious threat to the English position since the Ilbert Bill agitation in the 1880's. In an attempt to stabilize their position in south India, the English group sought to assist the non-Brahmans in the Justice Party, because they alone believed in the retention of the British connection.

Nonofficial British Attitudes

One of the most important reasons for the alliance between the Justice Party and the unofficial English community in Madras was their common response to Mrs. Besant and the Home Rule movement. Tempers among the English were greatly tried by Mrs. Besant's political demands, which were stated with force and conviction to receptive Indian audiences in the middle of a World War in which Great Britain was seriously involved. It was easy for the English to look upon Mrs. Besant's agitation as traitorous.

Perhaps the most articulate, and the most vehement, spokesman for these views of the English business group was T. Earle Welby, the editor of the English daily, the *Madras Mail*. In his editorials and other journalistic statements in the *Mail*, Welby constantly sought to harass Mrs. Besant and to discredit her and her Brahman associates. Early in 1916, in reviewing her book, *India: A Nation*, he wrote that she had "bespattered with mud" the great work of England in India and no longer had the right to appeal to British justice: "Venom . . . is not made the more acceptable by being mingled with slime."[1] For a few months in 1916 he accepted correspondence on the subject of Home Rule—mainly, as it turned out, from non-Brahmans who attacked Brahmans—though he was careful to observe that the *Mail* "held no brief for one or other of the classes" but considered that each should have a fair representation in the public services.[2] But he closed the

[1] *Madras Mail*, Jan. 22, 1916.

[2] *Ibid*., July 19, 1916. One letter (July 22) complained that "the misfortune in this Presidency is that the Brahmins very largely form the rulers . . . in all branches of administration." Another non-Brahman wrote (May 29) that "In India only 2 per cent of the population are literates. Most of them are Brahmins. Some educated people in the name of India, agitate for Home Rule, which is only caste rule . . . People must convene meetings and resolutions requesting the Government not to give self-government for the present, as the grant benefits Brahmins only."

columns to the subject on the grounds that the letters were bound to cause ill feeling between Brahmans and non-Brahmans.[3] Nevertheless, he permitted the young Brahman Congress politician, S. Satyamurti, to rebut the charge that Madras Congress organization was run entirely by Brahmans.[4] On December 1, 1916, he again pleaded that a paper owned by Indians was a more suitable and appropriate forum for a discussion of the Brahman–non-Brahman question than one conducted by Englishmen, whose position should be one of "benevolent neutrality."

For the next eight months the *Mail* remained virtually silent on the controversial issue, even refusing to publish the Non-Brahmin Manifesto. The Coimbatore conference, which was coincident with Montagu's announcement, provoked Welby to give a word of advice—namely, that if real differences existed, they ought to be stated frankly and openly. "Separate political organization," he said, "is not the cause of difference but its symptom, and if all separate communal activity were to disappear in India today it would be an evil sight rather than a good [one]."[5] But during the month following Montagu's announcement, all the elements in the hostility of the nonofficial British community came to the surface. The *Mail*, which aimed to represent this group, marched into battle and declared that the British nonofficial community would actively support the one group—the Justice Party—that opposed Home Rule.

Montagu's announcement, which in the view of *The Times* in London represented the "clearest and most definitive declaration of British aims in India which has been officially made since November, 1858,"[6] was interpreted by the nonofficial British group in Madras presidency as a threat to the continued British

[3] *Ibid.*, July 22, 1916.

[4] "The Congress," wrote Satyamurti, "may have many faults of commission and omission. But, surely, it has not worked on sectarian or caste lines." *Ibid.*, Nov. 17, 1916.

[5] *Ibid.*, Aug. 21, 1917.

[6] *The Times* (London), Aug. 21, 1917.

presence in India. Who, they asked, was to be responsible for these impending reforms? Was this decision "to be left to an educated Indian minority aspiring to power?"[7] Was the Indian government to tolerate an organization like Congress which endorsed passive resistance while the empire was at war?[8] To the nonofficial British group, no movement that encouraged the "wilful obstruction of the Government" should be tolerated, regardless of race or creed.[9] Instead, the *Mail* urged that Mrs. Besant as the instigator of the political agitation should be deported to England, where she could have little or no effect on a public that was preoccupied by the war.[10]

Division Among the Non-Brahmans

Montagu's August announcement not only intensified political activity but also assisted in the definition of various political interests in the presidency. All these interests had expressed their constitutional needs even before Mrs. Besant began her Home Rule movement, but it was the imminence of constitutional change that provoked the British community and other groups to assert themselves and claim protection in the new constitutional order.

Simultaneously with his announcement on August 20, Montagu

[7] *Madras Mail*, Aug. 22, 1917.

[8] Answering its own question, the *Mail* noted: "It was Thomas Carlyle, we believe who remarked not many years ago, that the population of England consisted of 'some thirty million people, mostly fools.' The great historian, we fancy, would hardly pass a less severe judgement on the people of India today, whose political sense is still far behind that even of Victorian England." *Ibid.*, Aug. 27, 1917.

[9] *Ibid.*, Aug. 31, 1917.

[10] *Ibid.*, Aug. 29 and 30, 1917. As early as October, 1915, following the shelling of Madras by the German ship *Emden*, Pentland had urged that Mrs. Besant be deported, but the Government of India refused. See Lady Pentland, *The Right Honourable John Sinclair, Lord Pentland G.C.S.I.*, p. 250. An excellent picture of the British domestic preoccupation with the war can be found in Arthur Marwick, *The Deluge, British Society and the First World War* (London, 1965).

had declared his intention of heading a mission to India in order to view the political scene at first hand, to make himself and his colleagues accessible to all group interests, and, so far as possible, to work out the principles and some of the details of constitutional reform. This news hastened the division among the politically active non-Brahmans in Madras, each section hoping to impress upon the Secretary of State the fact that it, and it alone, represented the mass of Hindus in the province. During the last week of August, the Justice Party held a number of meetings to discuss how it could best present its case, contending that it represented not only the caste Hindus but also the untouchables, all of whom merited communal representation in the same way as this had been granted to the Muslims in 1909. Tyagaraja Chetti accordingly sent Montagu a cable stating that the Justice Party represented 40 million non-Brahmans (the total population of the province being 41 million) in Madras presidency. This action alienated the *Hindu*, which, though edited by a Brahman, had so far been fairly noncommittal on the entire Brahman–non-Brahman question. "No fair-minded member of the Anglo-Indian Community," the *Hindu* said, "can fail to discern the fact that the separatist tendency of a certain section of the Indian community, as shown in the running of their own organs, vilifying other classes of people, starting separate associations and political Conferences, and crying down the political activities of those from whom they have seceded or are willing to cooperate with, will have the certain effect of impeding the forward march of the whole Community."[11] The *Hindu* went on to point out that the Indian National Congress, at both provincial and district levels, included many non-Brahmans who were of "one mind" so far as the Congress-League Scheme and the kind of political activity required to attain it were concerned. This was true, but there was a growing

[11] *Hindu* (weekly ed.), Sept. 14, 1917. The term Anglo-Indian here means, in the old sense, Englishmen who lived in India — missionaries, I.C.S. officers, businessmen, and so on.

number of non-Brahmans within Congress who were skeptical of the adequacy of the Congress-League Scheme, for though it contained in outline form the minimum constitutional demands of the Muslim League and the Congress, it said nothing about non-Brahmans. These Congress non-Brahmans in Madras began to think in terms of an organization that would specifically seek communal representation—this being necessary in order to safeguard their interests in elections under the reforms—but that would still allow them to remain inside Congress.

One Congress non-Brahman wrote to *New India* shortly after Tyagaraja Chetti's cable to Montagu arguing that although there was no point in keeping Brahmans out of a political organization, there must be some organization limited to non-Brahmans which would voice non-Brahman opinion within Congress in opposition to the claims of the Justice Party.[12] A week later, Salla Guruswami Chetti submitted a letter to the *Hindu*, signed by 140 persons (mostly non-Brahmans), urging that the Congress-League Scheme be pressed on Montagu and the Government of India "for adoption in its entirety," subject only to the principle of adequate recognition of "the various communities" of south India.[13] A meeting of Congress non-Brahmans was held on September 15 to discuss how non-Brahman interests could be secured, even under the Congress-League Scheme, but several Justice Party leaders, among them O. Kandaswami Chetti, contrived to take over the proceedings, and the ensuing fracas became so violent that the chairman, P. Kesava Pillai, was obliged to call in the police to restore order.

The *Hindu*, toning down the affair, commented (September 17) that "The non-Brahmans are as solidly in favour of Home Rule as any other community, despite the efforts of a small but exceedingly vocal clique which has been magnified by the forces of

[12] *New India*, Sept. 7, 1917.
[13] *Hindu* (weekly ed.), Sept. 14, 1917.

reaction as representing the forty odd millions in this Presidency." The Congress non-Brahmans were determined, however, and promptly called a second meeting, for September 20, to which only persons with tickets issued by Kesava Pillai and other Congress non-Brahmans would be admitted. This meeting proved to be the inaugural meeting of the Madras Presidency Association (M.P.A.), as it was soon called, the chief aim of which was to place before Montagu a scheme of reforms designed to give non-Brahmans full communal representation.[14] In this it was directly opposed to the Justice Party, which was, the M.P.A. said, unrepresentative of the non-Brahmans in the presidency.[15] Justice Party papers accused the M.P.A. of being the tool of the Madrasi Brahmans, who had set it up purposely to try and reduce the popularity of the Justice Party. The *Hindu* supported the formation of the M.P.A. as "not only necessary but urgent" because it was the only way to combat the Justice Party, which it characterized as being made up of "wire-pullers from behind."[16] At the same time, the *Hindu* reasoned, a movement such as that represented by the M.P.A. was only a temporary phase implicit in any struggle for national unity and independence.

M.P.A. leaders, ignoring Justice Party criticisms, began to build an organizational structure, a task that was made a good deal easier by their positions within Congress. A central office was established in Madras city with twenty branches elsewhere in the province. Different claims were made as to members: the M.P.A. at first said that it had 2,000, but an editorial in the *Hindu* put the number at 800.[17] Leadership for the M.P.A. came from the same socioeconomic groups as those of the Justice Party—mostly the well-educated, middle-class non-Brahmans, with the difference that there were only a few *zamindars* and large landowners—

[14] *New India*, Sept. 22, 1917.
[15] *Ibid.*, Oct. 10, 1917.
[16] *Hindu*, Dec. 24, 1917.
[17] *Ibid.* (weekly ed.), Dec. 14, 1917; also *ibid.*, Dec. 18, 1917.

and accordingly less money. Indeed, the M.P.A. always had trouble with its finances.[18]

Like the Justice Party, the M.P.A. had both an English-language newspaper and a Tamil newspaper. C. Karunakaran Menon, at one time an active opponent of Mrs. Besant and publisher of *Non-Brahmin Letters*, devoted his paper, the *Indian Patriot*, to M.P.A. interests. The Tamil paper was a new one, backed by a limited liability company (and at first very shaky financially). It was called *Desabhaktan* ("The Patriot"), and beginning December 7, 1917, it appeared daily under the vigorous editorship of Kaliyanasundaram Mudaliar (known as Tiru. Vi. Ka.), a young Vellala journalist.[19]

The Effect of Mrs. Besant's Release

Though the non-Brahmans in Madras were united in their demand for some form of communal representation, they were divided over the issue of Home Rule. In the weeks following Mrs. Besant's internment, the boundaries between the supporters and opposers of Home Rule became more and more marked. The government action not only gave her great local fame, but quickly vaulted her into a position of supreme political importance in national affairs.

In an attempt to diminish Mrs. Besant's importance, Dr. Nair wrote a scathing letter to the *Mail* and the *Justice* reiterating the details of the Leadbeater scandal of 1913, and he followed this with a long series of articles containing the complete correspondence between Mrs. Besant and Leadbeater. These got wide publicity, particularly after they were collected (1918) under the title, *The Evolution of Annie Besant.* But despite the efforts of Dr. Nair and other members of the Justice Party to denigrate

[18] A great deal of its money came from Lodd Govindoss, a Madras city jeweler.

[19] See Pulavar Arasu, *Tiru. Vi. Kaliyāṇasuntaraṉār* [biography of Tiru. Vi. Kaliyanasundaram Mudaliar] (Tirunelveli, 1961), pp. 43–46.

her, Mrs. Besant's popularity continued to grow. In July, 1917, soon after Mrs. Besant had gone to Ootacamund, her name was proposed for the presidency of the December session of the Indian National Congress in Calcutta. *New India* (July 2, 1917), run in Mrs. Besant's absence by among others T. K. Telang (a Poona Brahman), in making the proposal spoke of her in almost Gandhian terms: only Annie Besant, it said, could utter a "life message on Indian Home Rule to the world, and express India's resolve of soul force to win it"; only Mrs. Besant had sufficient prestige, for she alone had devoted her life to India's independence, she alone had nerved India to new determination. In short, Congress was bound to honor itself by honoring its greatest martyr. The Justice *Non-Brahman*, retorted on August 19 that if Mrs. Besant were made president of the Congress it would become a dead organization, full of undesirables.

Mrs. Besant and her two colleagues, Wadia and Arundale, were released on September 17, and three days later Mrs. Besant arrived in Madras to an enthusiastic welcome. Her journey from the railway station to the Theosophical headquarters at Adyar was made in a four-wheeled landau drawn by a pair of white horses:

> a silk canopy, obtained from one of the temples, was held over Mrs. Besant by two students wearing Home Rule badges . . . The procession was preceded by a number of *bhajana* parties chanting hymns, and in the rear followed a long train of carriages. . . . At some of the bazaars *en route* cocoanuts were broken in honour of Mrs. Besant, the kernel being distributed amongst the poor. Near Mylapore, Sir Subramania Iyer joined the procession, which on reaching the Tank Square was met by a large party of Iyengar Brahmins, singing Vedic hymns.[20]

Mrs. Besant's release was widely hailed as the conquest of Indian national feeling over the bureaucratic forces in Madras, and a great many outdoor meetings were held in her honor. Her return

[20] *Madras Mail*, Sept. 21, 1917.

to Madras was crowned, as was expected, by her election to the presidency of the Indian National Congress.[21]

If her release thrust Mrs. Besant into the leadership of the Indian national movement in late 1917, it also brought on her head great contempt from the British nonofficial community all over India. Nowhere was this calumny more bitter than in Madras, where Welby and the *Mail* demanded that the Government of India and the Secretary of State explain their action. Pressed by imperialist opinion in England, Montagu told the House of Commons that, although the release of Mrs. Besant and her colleagues was undertaken by the Government of India "on their own responsibility," this did not mean that the Secretary of State for India was "not in complete accord with their action." The August 20 announcement, he explained, had altered the situation radically, and he had therefore urged the Government to recommend that the Madras authorities release Mrs. Besant in order "to secure a tranquil atmosphere," on the grounds that since her activities extended to provinces other than Madras the matter was of more than provincial interest. Montagu stressed, however, that her release did not imply "any criticism of any action originally taken by the Local [Madras] Government."[22]

Welby, with considerable unpleasantness, interpreted Montagu's explanation as a pointed attack on British authority in India which would bring about the dissolution of the Indian empire. He urged British subjects resident in Madras to oppose Montagu's efforts in every way possible, since he felt that the August announcement and Mrs. Besant's release gave the appearance of the British community groveling in the face of Indian criticism.

> An orgy of . . . self humiliation is in progress, for the amusement of those who assail everything British, and we are asked to be quiet

[21] The voting in the districts took place in August, and her election was ratified in September.

[22] Great Britain, 5 *Parliamentary Debates* (Commons), XCIII (1917), cols. 22–23.

> lest we disturb Mr. Montagu's visit, we reply that we can do without it, that India can do without him as Secretary of State, and that we mean to use every legitimate method of bringing about his ejection from office. This policy is not anti-Indian; it is not a policy of hostility to reform; it is, however, the sole alternative to joining in the servile exhibitions which . . . have disgusted every Englishman in the country.[23]

To both the *Mail* and *Justice* there appeared to be only one effective way of protesting Mrs. Besant's release, and that was to urge the resignation of Lord Pentland, the governor of Madras. *Justice* contended that the reversal of Pentland's order had so damaged the prestige of the Madras government that only "a change in *personnel*" could restore confidence. It was therefore in Lord Pentland's own interests to resign and return to England to "make a statement in his own defence" in the House of Lords.[24] For the *Mail* the resignation of Lord Pentland was imperative, since it saw in Mrs. Besant's release Montagu's willingness to appease the south Indian Brahman lawyer-politicians:

> We have to decide now, once, for all, whether we are to be governed by Government or by random public gatherings. It is not a race question. It goes far deeper . . . Because a tiny minority of agitators, almost all belonging to one class of the people and to one profession, have established government by public meeting, and Mr. Montagu's conception of statesmanship, apparently accepted

[23] *Madras Mail*, Sept. 22, 1917. One of the examples of racism in which Welby indulged appeared in the *Mail* two days after Mrs. Besant's release. It ran as follows:

"Now is God's purpose in us perfected,
Complete the work of Clive and Nicholson,
When in this Empire that their swordblades won
Authority is mocked and buffeted,
And England's voice, no more the lion's they knew
Becomes the whisper of this Wandering Jew."

[24] *Justice*, Sept. 19, 1917, quoted in *Hindu* (weekly ed.), Sept. 21, 1917.

> by the Government of India, is to pander to them in order to secure a "calm atmosphere."[25]

It was quite apparent that Pentland would not resign, however: the "highly critical" position of Great Britain in the war precluded his resignation until "the war was over and his services were no longer necessary."[26] Welby at any rate urged Europeans both in Madras and in Calcutta to join the European Association, which had been founded in 1883 at the time of the Ilbert Bill agitation and of which he was now president, and to send him the names of those in Great Britain who "might be willing to help" in the fight against Home Rule.[27]

Welby continued to encourage the Justice Party to organize and present its point of view. He thought Europeans would be able to work with the Justice Party because it was the only Indian group that had a "definite hostility to violent changes and to the ambitions of a little oligarchical clique."[28] Further, because the Justice Party was committed to the retention of British rule in India, its members were particularly appropriate as partners of the nonofficial British group in Madras.[29] Pursuing this alignment, the *Mail* started a special section called "Crisis in India," which reprinted articles from newspapers in England opposing political reform and also included extracts from the Justice Party papers. Letters in support of the *Mail*'s position began to pour in, and membership in the European Association increased sharply. One member stated that he had been in Madras as a businessman for

[25] *Madras Mail*, Sept. 19, 1917. The Justice Party's *Non-Brahman* heartily agreed: "'Be bloody, bold, resolute' as the witches told Macbeth and you can bring the Government of India on its knees. That is the lesson of the Besant internment and release and no community in India has more reason to remember this than the backward ones." *Non-Brahman*, Sept. 23, 1917 (*Madras NNR, 1917*).

[26] Statement of Alexander Cardew, quoted in Lady Pentland, *Lord Pentland*, pp. 252–253.

[27] *Madras Mail*, Sept. 19, 1917.

[28] *Ibid.*, Oct. 6, 1917.

[29] *Ibid.*, Oct. 9, 1917.

twenty-two years but the events of the past few months had demonstrated beyond any doubt that "if we are to hold our own in this country" the English would have to organize and enter the political arena in ways they had never done before. As one member of the Madras association said, he could not help blaming the Europeans themselves for not having taken steps years before "to scotch the Home Rule agitation."[30]

The quick response to Welby's drive was not unlike the reaction that had greeted the Non-Brahmin Manifesto when it appeared the year before. For both the non-Brahmans in the Justice Party and the nonofficial British community, Mrs. Besant's Home Rule movement was clearly a threat to orderly government, since it would put into power "a renegade European and a few thousand Brahmin vakils."[31] The *Mail* was vindictive in its attacks on Montagu, but the fears that it expressed were not new. For many years, the British civil servants and the mercantile community in Madras had looked with great distrust on the interference of the Home Government in Madras affairs. Montagu's treatment of Mrs. Besant illustrated to the nonofficial British group in Madras that he knew nothing of the imperial traditions which maintained British position and status in India. Transgression of these conventions brought forth a rush of criticism, including racist taunts, on the Secretary of State, who was suspected because he was a Jew, and because he was believed to be assisting the Brahmans to positions of power.

Communal Representation

Both the Justice Party and the M.P.A. believed that the only way to prevent Brahmans from assuming power under the new constitutional regime was to assure non-Brahmans a special position

[30] *Ibid.*, Oct. 24, 1917. British businessmen in Calcutta were almost as violent in their reactions as those in Madras. See John H. Broomfield, "Politics and the Bengal Legislative Council, 1912–26," unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Australian National University, 1963, pp. 157–158.

[31] *Madras Mail*, Dec. 28, 1917.

in the franchise arrangement. But the question of communal representation for non-Brahmans had its strong opponents, as well as its adherents. Mrs. Besant, for example, pointed out that the caste Hindus who were demanding special treatment in Madras presidency could not be considered as important minorities but rather "important majorities."[32] Kesava Pillai, the president of the M.P.A., had himself acknowledged the justice of this point when, shortly after Montagu's announcement, he quoted an editorial from the *Indian Patriot* commenting that it was strange for a majority group such as non-Brahmans to claim communal representation to safeguard their rights against the activities of Brahmans. To Karunakaran Menon, and to Kesava Pillai as well, this was something like "Hindus claiming separation as a means of safeguarding their interests against the Muhammadans."[33]

Even those non-Brahmans who voiced their opposition to communal representation for a majority community changed their minds following Tyagaraja Chetti's cable to Montagu. Kesava Pillai with assistance from E. V. Ramaswami Naicker, Kaliyanasundaram Mudaliar, and P. Varadarajulu Naidu combined to form the M.P.A. shortly after the attempt of the Justice Party to demonstrate its monopoly of non-Brahman interests. Three months after the formation of the M.P.A., Kesava Pillai proposed his modified position before the special Madras Provincial Congress Conference in December, 1917. Given the peculiar circumstances of Madras presidency, he said, it was the M.P.A.'s demand that "the communities . . . other than Brahmanas should also be adequately represented in the Legislative Council."[34] There was considerable opposition to this resolution despite the support given it by Sarojini Naidu on the grounds that practical politics demanded its implementation. V. Chakkarai Chetti, a Christian member of the M.P.A., warned that if the resolution was defeated,

[32] *Times of India* editorial, quoted in *New India*, May 25, 1916.
[33] *New India*, Aug. 25, 1917. [34] *Ibid.*, Dec. 22, 1917.

many non-Brahman Congress members in Madras would desert. After all, it was the clear understanding of the M.P.A. in attending the conference that communal representation for non-Brahmans would "be embodied as an integral part of the Congress-League Scheme."[35] There was disagreement on the matter in Telugu Congress ranks also. Those who opposed communal representation generally felt as did M. Ramachandra Rao, a highly articulate Brahman who was later to oppose the demand in London in 1919. He argued that communal representation would only "tear the communities apart."[36] Those who favored it, like Pattabhi Sittaramayya, also a Brahman and leader of the Andhra movement, felt, on the other hand, that communal representation for non-Brahmans in south India was most appropriate to the circumstances. Forcing territorial rather than communal representation on the presidency, Pattabhi Sittaramayya said, would not stop "the present irritation and heartburning and by one stroke of the pen fuse the castes and sects of India." It was much better to provide non-Brahmans with whatever system would advance their political interests.[37]

After some effort on the part of M.P.A. leaders in Madras, communal representation was in fact accepted by the Madras Provincial Congress Committee as a necessary change under the proposed constitutional reforms; indeed, two years later Kesava Pillai insisted that there had never been any opposition to the adoption of the principle of communal representation among the Congress Brahmans or Home Rulers in Madras. This assertion understated the considerable opposition that had been voiced to the idea, both in Madras and the Andhra Congress committees, but he was right in suggesting that few Madras Brahmans were ever openly and irrevocably against the proposal.[38] As a result, the M.P.A. was

[35] *Ibid.*

[36] *Hindu* (weekly ed.), Oct. 5, 1917.

[37] *New India*, Aug. 31, 1917.

[38] *Hindu* (weekly ed.), Aug. 14, 1919. He even said that the well-known Brahman C. Rajagopalachariar had supported the idea.

permitted to carry on its propaganda work for communal representation, and yet remain within Congress.

The Justice Party, having been committed from the first to the principle of communal representation, did not have to contend with any opposition from its own membership. In fact, K. V. Reddi Naidu, soon after Montagu's announcement, cited the grant of Muslim communal representation under the 1909 Morley-Minto Reforms as an adequate precedent for Justice Party claims.[39] The memorandum that the Justice Party presented to Montagu when he arrived in Madras in mid-December, 1917, demanded that "stringent rules" should be framed to secure adequate representation of non-Brahmans in the legislatures and in "all branches of administration."[40] According to one Justice Party scheme, each main Brahman division and each non-Brahman subcaste should have separate representation—namely, special provisions for the four groups of Brahmans who formed about 3 percent of the population of Madras presidency, and for the five groups of non-Brahmans: the Balija Naidus, the Pillais and Mudaliars (both Vellalas), the Chettis, and the Panchamas or outcastes.[41] Implicit in all the Justice Party claims was the assumption that the non-Brahmans in Madras presidency were backward and therefore could not hope to attain political influence without special privileges.

Montagu's announcement in Parliament also made the Justice Party leaders realize that if they were to demonstrate their position as the sole representatives of south Indian non-Brahmans they would have to organize and win the support of the outcastes, who composed nearly one-fifth of the total population of the province. The two men who led the effort in Madras city,

[39] *Hindu.* (weekly ed.), Oct. 5, 1917.

[40] S.I.L.F. Memorandum to Edwin Montagu, in T. Varadarajulu Naidu (comp.), *The Justice Movement, 1917*, p. 65.

[41] *Justice* editorial, reprinted in *Madras Mail*, Nov. 24, 1917.

O. Kandaswami Chetti and Dr. T. M. Nair, were both experienced in the field of social reform. Kandaswami Chetti, a professor at Madras Christian College, had been for several years the editor of the *Social Reform Advocate.* Dr. Nair had worked not only in medicine but also in government. As early as 1907 he had urged shorter hours for millworkers,[42] and in 1913, as a member of the Madras Legislative Council, he sponsored a medical registration bill which would enable patients who wanted medical aid of "the Western type" to distinguish between qualified and unqualified practitioners.[43] Dr. Nair and Kandaswami Chetti organized a meeting of outcastes on October 2, 1917, at the Spur Tank, to explain the platform of the Justice Party. Several party leaders spoke, and Dr. Nair suggested that a committee be set up to coordinate all the political activities of the Panchamas in the city, with the Justice Party giving advice and friendship. To his dismay, the president of the Panchama political organization, the Pariah Mahajanah Sabha, rebuffed his offer. It was true, Mr. Anchas the president admitted, that if Home Rule were granted the Panchamas would be crushed; but he thought that this would occur regardless of who achieved power, the Brahmans or the non-Brahman caste Hindus. He told the Justice Party non-Brahmans that if they wanted to lead the Panchamas "they should effect a reformation among themselves, and treat Panchamas as their brethren." Parthasarathi Naidu, the editor of *Andhra Prakasika*, in commenting on the meeting, indicated in a most prescient way one social policy that would be followed by many non-Brahmans a decade later. So long as Brahmans were sought out for "religious purposes," he said, ultimate Brahman domina-

[42] Great Britain, Parliamentary Papers, Vol. LXXIV (*Accounts and Papers*, Vol. XIII), Cd. 4292, 1908, "Report of the Indian Factory Commission, 1908," Minute of Dissent by Dr. Nair, pp. 81–114.

[43] MRO, Legislative, Ordinary Series, G.O. 45, Mar. 14, 1914: Letter from T. M. Nair to W. Francis, Secretary to the Madras Legislative Council, Feb. 19, 1914.

tion and control over the social system would continue.[44] Despite the rejection of its overtures to the Panchamas, the Justice Party continued to formulate a social policy that included prohibition, education for females and outcastes, fusion of subcastes, and government aid to industries.[45]

Articulation of a social policy was only one way in which the Justice Party could strengthen its position in south Indian affairs; in the face of the impending reforms it had also to formulate a political platform to combat the Home Rule policies of the M.P.A. and to make clear its desire for a constitutional reform. With this in mind, Dr. Nair wrote a series of articles in Justice, entitled "Political Reconstruction in India," in which he attacked the scheme of constitutional reform already drawn up by nineteen members of the Imperial Legislative Council in Delhi (the *Memorandum of the Nineteen*). The chief demand of the *Memorandum* was that there should be a large elected majority in the new legislative councils, and that these legislative councils should be given fiscal autonomy, with power to pass or reject the government's budget. Power over the budget would in fact give the councils control over the entire mechanism of government, for without their sanction money could not be appropriated for government expenditures, and a negative vote on the budget, at least in accordance with British parliamentary practice, could force the governor and his executive council to resign.

Dr. Nair was completely opposed to this demand to grant power

[44] *Hindu*, Oct. 9, 1917. At the meeting, Parthasarathi Naidu spoke in Tamil, but Dr. Nair's speech was given in English and translated into Tamil by S. Somasundaram Pillai.

[45] These policies were variously outlined by Tyagaraja Chetti at the Bezwada Telugu Non-Brahman Leaders' Conference, Nov. 11, 1917; by P. Ramarayaningar (later the Rajah of Panagal) at the Coimbatore Conference, Aug. 19, 1917; and by T. N. S. Thirthapati, Zamindar of Singampati, and L. K. Tulsiram, a Saurashtra from Madura, at the First Non-Brahman Confederation, Dec. 29, 1917. See Varadarajulu Naidu, *Justice Movement*, 1917, Section II, pp. 97, 11, 164, 162.

over the purse to the legislative councils, on the grounds that a government run mainly by a British bureaucracy could not function under such circumstances. Instead, he suggested a form of constitution (ultimately granted by the Montagu–Chelmsford Reforms in the form of dyarchy) that would give control of local government, sanitation, agriculture, cooperative credit, and industries to the legislative councils; these departments would be run by ministers selected from among the elected members of the council. Dr. Nair anticipated that there would be friction between these Indian ministers and the governor's Executive Council, but he thought the advance that this represented would nonetheless be "tremendous" (p. 53). At the same time, he advocated direct elections, a reorganization of states according to race, religion, or language, and, most important, the extension of the franchise so long as non-Brahmans were given communal electorates.[46]

Justice Party leaders were unanimous in their belief that these changes could never be won by coercion: they should be granted out of the British administrators' innate sense of justice.[47] It was British prestige and power, they thought, that had kept India a united nation, and to demand the immediate withdrawal of British authority would be to jeopardize the possibility of political advance in India. Otherwise, "Anarchy is bound to take the place of orderly progress."[48]

In their attempts to win a secure place in Madras politics, the M.P.A. and the Justice Party could perhaps agree on the necessity

[46] T. M. Nair, "Political Reconstruction in India," articles in *Justice*, reprinted in *Justice Movement, 1917*, pp. 41–65.

[47] See T. M. Nair's speech on "Our Immediate Political Outlook," *New India*, Mar. 15, 1917; also his remarks at the First Non-Brahman Confederation, Dec. 28, 1917 (quoted in the *Englishman*, Dec. 29, 1917), *New India*, Jan. 22, 1917, and a speech of O. Kandaswami Chetti at the meeting of the South Indian People's Association at Madras on Jan. 21, 1917 (*New India*, Jan. 22, 1917).

[48] T. M. Nair, "Political Reconstruction in India," in *Justice Movement, 1917*, p. 59.

for communal representation for non-Brahmans in the coming reforms. But they clashed violently over the matter of Home Rule. The manner in which the two organizations approached this issue revealed how they viewed their own position in south Indian society as non-Brahmans. Both, for instance, called non-Brahmans "Dravidians" and appealed to them on this level. Kaliyanasundaram Mudaliar and Dandapani Pillai of the M.P.A.'s *Desabhaktan* said it was untrue that Brahmans were responsible for the miserable condition of the so-called Dravidians, and they urged non-Brahmans to support Home Rule.[49] Varadarajulu Naidu, also of the M.P.A., in his paper *Prapanchamitran* even branded all Dravidians who were unwilling to recognize the necessity for Home Rule as traitors.[50] *Dravidan*, the Justice Party Tamil-language daily, rebuked Dravidians for listening to a woman and for demanding Home Rule.[51] Appeals were also made by the Justice Party to Dravidians through the publication of Tamil pamphlets containing Tamil songs which were sung at the beginning of party meetings in the district towns. Printed on cheap newsprint, these song pamphlets were distributed locally in order to discredit Home Rule and rally all "Dravidians" to reject the Brahman "plots" for Home Rule by which they intended to replace a British *raj* with a Brahman one.[52] The basis for these racial and political appeals was described succinctly by a non-Brahman Home Ruler:

> If the theory that the non-Brahmanas are Dravidians and the Brahmanas non-Dravidians can be accepted, then the position of the

[49] Speeches at Dindigal, Madura district, *New India*, Nov. 28, 1917. See also the speech given by Kaliyanasundaram Mudaliar at Kumbakonam on Nov. 18, 1917, in *Swadeshimitran*, Nov. 24, 1917 (*Madras NNR, 1917*).

[50] *Prapanchamitran*, Apr. 23, 1918 (*Madras NNR, 1918*).

[51] *Dravidan*, Nov. 27 and 28, 1917 (*Madras NNR, 1917*).

[52] Ti. Tiraviyampiḷḷai, *Hōmrūl ḳaṇṭana tiraviṭar muṉṉeṟṟa irāja vivāsak ḳummi* ["Kummi Song Refuting Home Rule and Urging Dravidian Advancement"] (Trichinopoly, 1918). Six thousand copies of this pamphlet were issued in two printings in 1918.

> anti-Brahmanas [members of the Justice Party] is that it wants to rouse all the non-Brahmanas to a recognition of their past glory with a view to put the haughty Brahmana who is the intruder from the North in his proper place. The Brahmana is supposed to have come down with his wretched caste system and spoiled the South Indian community usurping for himself an enviable position in the society to the detriment of others, especially the "Dravidians." Therefore it is incumbent upon the Dravidian to fight out the Brahmana usurper, if not in any other way at least in the Home Rule movement.[53]

Statements by the non-Brahmans in both the M.P.A. and the Justice Party that they were Dravidians demonstrated that previously inactive groups were preparing themselves for Montagu's visit. The increased organizational attempts of both groups were geared to the need to represent the non-Brahmans as a politically underprivileged but important majority.

Montagu in Madras

Montagu landed in Bombay on November 10, 1917, and at once began a grueling round of interviews and discussions, interrupted only by week-end shooting trips. Not only government officials from all over India but many Indian politicians, great and small, had to be granted audience so as to state their views — usually in the presence of the Viceroy, Lord Chelmsford.[54] Montagu very early came to a number of important conclusions which inevitably influenced his later decisions.

[53] V. Ramalingam Pillai, "The Dravidian and the Brahmana Oligarchy," *New India*, Jan. 25, 1918.

[54] Montagu's biographer says: "It was surely the tragedy of this Indian visit that so many weary hours were spent listening to the views of people and parties of secondary importance." S. D. Waley, *Edwin Montagu*, p. 145. Only in one instance was Lord Chelmsford's presence circumvented — when Annie Besant met Montagu in Delhi. For two versions of this interview, see Nethercot, *The Last Four Lives of Annie Besant*, pp. 269–270.

For one thing, he learned that each province wanted to be treated differently.[55] Some provinces also complained of "the remoteness of the Government of India, and its lack of co-operation with the Provincial governments."[56] Montagu's conversations convinced him of what he had already suspected — that the Government of India itself needed a great deal of overhauling: "The dead hand of the Government of India is over everything, blighting it."[57] Compounding the difficulties was the fact that in the past five years there had been a "tremendous hardening" of Indian opinion as a result of a wave of political feeling "sweeping over the country"; Montagu despaired of being able to give the Indian National Congress what they asked for "or anything approaching it [because] Curzon, Milner, Bonar Law, etc. would never take it."[58]

Montagu had last been in India in 1912–1913 and even then had noted in his diary that "India ought to have a great official purifying and it does so want energy."[59] His trip there in 1917–

[55] Comments on an interview with Michael O'Dwyer, Lt. Governor of the Punjab, entry for Nov. 14, 1917, in Edwin S. Montagu, *An Indian Diary*, ed. Venetia Montagu (London, 1930), p. 32. Special treatment was, of course, an old tradition with the local governments of the provinces. See Broomfield, "Politics and the Bengal Legislative Council," p. 109, for the exchange between the Governor of Bengal, Lord Carmichael, and Lord Crewe, Secretary of State for India, in 1912, over the need to recognize Bengal's unique requirements.

[56] Conversation with Lord Willingdon, Governor of Bombay, entry for Nov. 10, 1917, in Montagu, *An Indian Diary*, p. 7.

[57] *Ibid.*, p. 116, entry for Dec. 18, 1917. Before becoming Secretary of State, Montagu made a very forthright statement in the Commons condemning the Government of India for being "too wooden, too iron, too antedeluvian, to be of any use for modern purposes." Great Britain, 5 *Parliamentary Debates* (Commons), XCV (1917), 2205.

[58] *An Indian Diary*, p. 61, conversation with Sir Benjamin Robertson, Chief Commissioner of the Central Provinces, entry for Nov. 27, 1917; and p. 116, conversation with Charles Roberts, M.P., a member of Montagu's deputation, entry for Nov. 27, 1917. Curzon, Milner, and Bonar Law were members of the Lloyd George cabinet.

[59] Entry for Mar. 8, 1913, quoted in Waley, *Edwin Montagu*, p. 333.

1918 was in a way the culmination of a long and enduring interest in the country, a country which he knew better and toward whose aspirations he was more sympathetic than perhaps any other individual in British public life.[60] At the same time, the trip was a very lonely one. He knew that the mission he headed required "the ability, the tact, the courage of the greatest of English statesmen," but that the responsibility rested with him and with him alone: "It is I who have got to do this thing," he noted in his diary on November 10, the day of his arrival. "I would that I could make it clear to those at home that if the results of our deliberations are either something which India will not accept, or a niggling, miserly, grudging safeguard, fiddling with the existing order of things, we shall have defrauded, and defrauded irreparably—for they will never believe us again—a vast continent whose history is our glory, and whose hopes and aspirations, fears and tribulations it is pathetic to see."[61] The constitutional reform, he thought, "must be epoch-making, or it is a failure; it must be the keystone of the future of India."[62]

Few officials in India warmed to Montagu's enthusiasm and sense of mission. Lord Chelmsford, who was the ostensible cosponsor of the constitutional enterprise, was a cautious and somewhat weak administrator who probably caused Montagu more consternation than any other official in India. For Chelmsford and his advisers, the proposed reforms meant something much

[60] When Montagu was asked to resign from the Cabinet in March, 1922, he told the Commons that "as I leave my work, may I say that the fascination of India's problems has obsessed me all my life—the Princes and the Native States, each with their individual characteristics, the peoples of India, awakening, striving, often with ill-defined ideals; so varied in their developments, in their races, in their history, in their views, the glorious conception, as I thought it was, and I think it is, of the British Commonwealth of nations." Quoted in *ibid*., p. 280. Montagu asked for the post of Viceroy of India on three occasions because he thought he was the best qualified person for the job.

[61] Montagu, *An Indian Diary*, pp. 10–11.

[62] *Ibid*., p. 8.

more timid and limited than those envisaged by Montagu. In the face of marked opposition, apathy, and sometimes hostility, Montagu proceeded on his tour, first to Bombay, then Delhi, and down the east coast. He arrived in Madras on December 14, to encounter what was perhaps his worst reception. Lord Pentland delayed his official call until a week after his arrival; on December 21 he breakfasted with Montagu in order to explain his attitude toward constitutional reform. "He told me," Montagu wrote in his diary, "that he believed we ought not to talk politics to these people at all; we ought to play with them, humour them on politics, and discuss with them industrial development, education and social reform; that there is no necessity for doing anything; that he could not understand why we thought differently; that nobody in Madras wanted the announcement; that the whole of his [Executive] Council were unanimous . . . He talked about the Brahmins bitterly. He assured me that all respect for the Government had gone."[63] Nor did Montagu receive any solace from Pentland's wife, who sat next to him at a dinner party the same evening. Recounting the conversation, Montagu said, "she told me that Lord Pentland, as she called him, was the only man she had ever met whose actions were always dictated by an infallible sense of right and wrong, and gave me an opening to express my regret at the pain I have been instrumental in causing them both and to say . . . [that I] felt sure that they were wrong in thinking that their authority had been impaired."[64]

Unfortunately, Lord and Lady Pentland were not the only ones who had been deeply offended by the release of Mrs. Besant. Montagu discovered that to many English, Mrs. Besant's continued presence in Madras represented a continual embarrassment and disgrace, to themselves personally and to the British government. Hoping somehow to relieve the situation, he suggested that she should be invited to a government garden party. Pentland's

[63] *An Indian Diary*, p. 129. [64] *Ibid.*

reply was that "most of the Europeans would have walked off the ground."[65] Unlike the British in Madras, Montagu was very taken with Mrs. Besant. When he met her in Delhi in November at the time when the Congress and the Home Rule League presented their address, he noted in his diary (November 26): "Mrs. Besant in her white and gold embroidered Indian clothes, with her short, white hair, and the most beautiful voice I have ever heard, was very impressive, and read magnificently." But he concluded ruefully, "If only she had been well handled from the beginning! If only her vanity had been appealed to."[66]

If only Mrs. Besant had been handled with greater tact, perhaps Madras would never have become the political storm center of India in the months preceding Montagu's arrival. "It is here," wrote the *Mail*, "that the gospel of Home Rule has been preached most eloquently, most virulently. It is here that its non-Brahman opponents have organized most effectively, and carried war most boldly into the Home Rule camp. It is here, too, that the new European movement began."[67] Hysterical reactions within this so-called "new European movement" did not go unnoticed, and in November there was a big meeting of Home Rulers, Congressmen, and M.P.A. members to protest the "mischievous" campaign being carried on by the Anglo-Indian press in Madras and elsewhere in India.[68] There was no doubt but that the tranquillity of the presidency had been disturbed beyond anything within memory. After a conversation with Mrs. Henry Whitehead, the wife of the Bishop of Madras, Montagu commented in his diary: "She confirmed my impression that during the past five years the change which has come over Madras is simply appalling. Then it was a peaceful country, inhabited by men and women on amiable terms with one another, differing from the whole of the

[65] Conversation with Lord Chelmsford, *ibid.*, entry for Dec. 21, 1917, p. 126.

[66] *Ibid.*, pp. 57–58.

[67] *Madras Mail*, Dec. 14, 1917.

[68] *Hindu*, Nov. 6, 1917.

rest of India in being happy. Now the English hate the Indians; the Indians hate the English, and this new violent opposition of the Brahmins to the non-Brahmins has become the guiding principle of the place."[69] What particularly disturbed Montagu about the Brahman–non-Brahman difficulties in Madras was that though the non-Brahmans were "vigorous enough" in objecting to Brahman influence, they lay on their stomachs and cried out for government help instead of fighting. Moreover, though a promising party system had begun to form in Madras the non-Brahmans wanted to spoil it by the "horrible extension" of communal representation.[70] Montagu thought that communal representation was mistakenly designed to serve the needs of backward communities,[71] whereas the non-Brahmans he met did not appear to be from backward groups nor, with one exception, did they impress him greatly.

Among others, Montagu met Kandaswami Chetti of the Justice Party and Kesava Pillai of the M.P.A., but Dr. Nair was the only non-Brahman leader who made a strong impression. Nair was "very fierce" on communal representation, arguing that it was essential "for a time," at any rate. He also complained to Montagu about the Brahman officials, including a High Court judge, who had canvassed against him, saying that he simply could "not fight against this sort of thing." Montagu concluded that Dr. Nair was "most eloquent, rather impressive, and a vigorous personality, but he has obviously got a bee in his bonnet, because he explained that the Home Rule movement was financed by German money."[72]

The problems that Madras presented to the Secretary of State—the nonofficial British opposition to Home Rule, the reactionary

[69] Montagu, *An Indian Diary*, entry for Dec. 17, 1917, pp. 113–114. Bishop Whitehead wrote *Village Gods of South India* (2d ed.; Calcutta, 1921).

[70] *An Indian Diary*, entry for Dec. 19, 1917, p. 118.

[71] *Ibid.*, entry for Dec. 18, 1917, p. 115.

[72] *Ibid.*, entry for Dec. 21, 1917, p. 127.

Madras government, the Brahman–non-Brahman situation—seemed almost insoluble. Even the Governor appeared to Montagu an impossible phenomenon. "Pentland, thin, whiskered, in a tightly-buttoned frock coat, large gardenia-like flower in his buttonhole, saw us off on the platform looking what he is—an early Victorian Governor in post-war India." In microcosm, the situation in Madras represented in part what had happened all over India during the past five years, and Montagu understood this all too well: "I leave Madras with a very heavy heart. It seems to me hopeless. Here, if anywhere officials administrate and do not govern; here if anywhere, they refuse to explain themselves and hold themselves aloof . . . Here they have caused their own situation. Madras is not the same place that it was five years ago. Brahmins and non-Brahmins, English and Indian—all have been set at loggerheads."[73]

However hopeless it all seemed, Montagu had done what he had set out to do in Madras: he had given the major political groups, both English and Indian, a chance to press their claims; he had measured the extent of the Madras government's isolation and reluctance to reform itself; and he had even managed to tone down the *Mail's* attacks on himself and his reform scheme. A confrontation with Welby, whom he found the ablest of all the journalists he met,[74] also reassured the editor of Montagu's integrity. Three days after the interview, the *Mail* made a cautious conciliatory gesture. "Why . . . do we not invoke a blessing on . . . [Montagu's] enterprise and set about lulling European and non-Brahmin activity?" the paper asked; "Because we have

[73] *Ibid.*, entry for Dec. 22, 1917, pp. 135–136. Three days earlier he noted, "I am certain that the Government of Madras is an impossible institution."

[74] Recording the conversation in his diary, Montagu wrote: "Frankly he [Welby] admitted that the Mrs. Besant incident had made him determined to resist all reform; that his was a daily newspaper; he did not think much of what he wrote; that if he had been editing a weekly he might have watered down some of his language." *Ibid.*, entry for Dec. 17, 1917, p. 113.

no sort of guarantee that the limitations of pace and method he may impose on change will be respected when the Government are obliged to deal with an agitation for more hasty advance." But in the end the *Mail* was convinced that Montagu's proposed innovations were not so radical as the nonofficial British community in Madras had suspected. "We do not for a moment suppose that Mr. Montagu means to give India Home Rule," it concluded. "We think it quite possible his eventual proposals may excite sharper criticism in the Home Rule camp than in ours." [75]

Mrs. Besant's Decline

The *Mail*'s prescient comment indicated the great problems that were still to come — the formulation of a plan for Indian constitutional reform, and presentation of the plan to Parliament, to Congress, to Home Rulers, and to groups like the Justice Party. It also suggested the extent to which Congress and even Home Rule demands had been enhanced by the announcement and by Montagu's visit to India. Mrs. Besant, released from her internment by the mechanism of the August announcement, expressed some of these demands in her presidential address to the Congress session at Calcutta in December.

The Congress session was to open on December 26, and Mrs. Besant was greeted with much enthusiasm when she arrived in Calcutta on the twenty-fourth. Within a few days much of the enthusiasm in the Congress was transformed into active distrust. In the weeks preceding her trip to Calcutta, she had been fully occupied with the preparation of the speech. As given, it lasted an hour and fifty minutes and was mostly concerned with the challenge of Home Rule and the need for active work to ensure it. But she made the serious mistake of proposing that the office of president of the Congress, traditionally an honorary position lasting only for the duration of the annual meeting, be extended to one year. She promised to fulfill the office in the coming twelve

[75] *Madras Mail*, Dec. 20, 1917.

months with all devotion and diligence and said that she would campaign for Home Rule throughout the country. But both her proposal and her enthusiasm alienated many of the older leaders. Clearly she had gone too far.[76]

Justice, referring to Mrs. Besant's speech, called her a "conqueror, dictating terms of peace to the vanquished British Government, threatening the Government of India with a return to an even more vigorous agitation."[77] Though not exactly a conqueror, Mrs. Besant was certainly well aware that in order to maintain leadership both of the Home Rule movement and of the Congress, she must expand her audience to include Great Britain. Indeed, as the *Times of India* pointed out, Mrs. Besant's presidential remarks "were not addressed to the delegates in Calcutta, but to a large public seven thousand miles away."[78] Other political groups saw the necessity of this too. Welby of the *Mail* wrote: "Our organising work in India is done, so is that of our Indian friends. Our representations to the Secretary of State, and theirs, have been made. The battleground is now to be shifted to Westminster, and if we and the Indians who desire prudent and orderly political development are to succeed, there must be active educational work in the Press, on the platform, and in Parliamentary circles."[79] Montagu's visit to Madras had done much to soothe rumpled feelings, but however much the Secretary of State desired to create harmony among the English and those they governed, it was clearly going to be impossible to please everyone. And the interested parties knew that the decisions would be made not in India but in London. It was in London that all political groups, all interests, would have to present their case, if they hoped to have a say in the reforms that Montagu promised.

[76] See Nethercot, *The Last Four Lives of Annie Besant*, pp. 271–273. Three years later Gandhi succeeded in creating a year-round executive.

[77] *Justice* editorial, reprinted in the *Indian Daily Telegraph*, Jan. 6, 1918.

[78] *Times of India*, Jan. 4, 1918.

[79] *Madras Mail*, Jan. 28, 1918.

Mrs. Besant, prevented by wartime regulations from traveling on the high seas, could not hope to go to England and had to content herself with campaigning in India. She did so vigorously for the next few months while Montagu and Chelmsford prepared their report. But it was apparent that her period of glory was past. When the Montagu–Chelmsford *Report on Indian Constitutional Reforms* was released the following July, Mrs. Besant was at first dismayed at the moderateness of its innovations. She decided, however, that the *Report* ought to be accepted, with "drastic revisions." This was not enough for her young Home Rulers: when she attempted to explain her position at a Provisional Conference of the Congress in Madras called especially to consider the Reforms, she was opposed by many of those present. The meeting itself was "marred by shouting, hatred, and suspicion, directed mostly against her." The next day (August 5) in *New India*, "dazed by the storm," she asked her fellow Home Rulers, "My young Tamil brethren, what have I done to you that you hate me so bitterly? In the 'seventies of the last century, before you were born, I was working for India . . . I shall continue to work for her till Home Rule is won. I do not want to force myself on your meetings. I can work without talking, except when invited by friendly Indians. I intend to resign the Presidency of the Home Rule League, at the next annual meeting."[80] Her fate as the leader of the Indian nationalist movement appeared to have been symbolically sealed.

There were a number of reasons why Mrs. Besant came first to be despised and then simply forgotten in the welter of political events. Her "constitutional agitation" was supplanted during the Rowlatt troubles by Gandhi's compelling and dramatic *satyagraha* campaign; her white skin, a great asset in 1917, by 1919 was an

[80] *New India*, Aug. 5, 1918, and Nethercot, *The Last Four Lives of Annie Besant*, pp. 278–279. For a fascinating account of Mrs. Besant's last days in the front rank of Indian politics, see Nethercot, pp. 267–304.

insuperable liability; and her ignorance of any Indian language and her central appeal to the educated classes precluded any possibility of her becoming the mass leader that Gandhi was soon to prove himself. But viewing her career in retrospect, one sees that Mrs. Besant contributed in a number of ways to the politics of south India and of India generally. First of all, her style of politics aroused great feeling, either for or against her, and she created as many enemies as she did friends. Second, her political leadership and agitational skills formed a kind of transition — a necessary transition — between the quiet elitist Congress politics which existed before 1915 and the increasing mass participation which characterized the reaction to the Rowlatt Act four years later.

To England

Though Mrs. Besant was left to continue her political agitation in India, many Indian political leaders still hoped to take their demands to England. No one doubted the wisdom of this aspiration, but Indian political leaders found it all but impossible to make the trip. Tilak announced his intention of going to England in late March, 1918, but an order from England canceled his passport.[81] Many groups and individuals felt this action to be wholly unjust, and even the Justice Party, realizing that its own hopes for sending a representative to England at that time would be jeopardized, published a strong editorial in *Justice* opposing the action: "This is another instance of clumsy handling for which the Government are fast becoming famous . . . To permit them [the Tilak delegation] to make all the preparations and to get through their demonstration and shouting and then at the last moment to stop the deputation is undoubtedly

[81] One member of the Tilak delegation, a Tamil Christian lawyer named George Joseph, got as far as Gibraltar, but there his passport was revoked and he was forced to return to India; see T. V. Parvate, *Bal Gangadhar Tilak* (Ahmedabad, 1958), pp. 382–385.

more theatrical than responsible . . . If Government are going to be afraid of any threats about protest meetings and agitations, then they deserve all they get."[82] This was unusually outspoken criticism from the Justice Party, but the situation in early 1918 was unusually precarious. A week earlier at a Justice conference at Tanjore it had been announced that a deputation from the party was to be sent to England, with Dr. Nair as the leader, in order to "counteract the insidious campaign of the Home Rulers." Dr. Nair maintained that the Home Rulers would have little chance of getting the ear of British statesmen during the war, and even if they managed to address meetings, he would give speeches as well, "and give the British people a true picture of the state of affairs here."[83]

The Justice Party fared little better with the passport authorities than did other political groups, however. Dr. Nair alone was granted a passport, and he only because the state of his health (he suffered from diabetes) made it necessary for him to seek medical attention in London.[84] It therefore devolved upon him to make known to the British public and to politicians the Justice Party's demands for communal representation.

Of all the Justice leaders at this time, Dr. Nair was the most

[82] *Justice*, Apr. 8, 1918 (*Madras NNR, 1918*).

[83] *Madras Mail*, Apr. 3, 1918. On the day following the meeting, *Justice* said much the same thing: "The British people must therefore see that in the false name of freedom and liberty and so forth they do not hand over the vast and ignorant millions of India, tied hand and foot, to the most insidious and most artful, the most cunning and the most relentless class which ever has been known in the history of mankind." *Justice*, Apr. 1, 1918 (*Madras NNR, 1918*).

[84] Questioned in the Madras Legislative Council as to why a passport had been granted to Dr. Nair but denied to Tilak, the Madras Government replied that it had been provided as a result of a medical certificate describing Dr. Nair's physical condition, but that this medical certificate was a confidential document that could not be published. MRO, Public, Miscellaneous Series, G.O. 967, Oct. 29, 1918. See also the Government's communique in the *Madras Mail*, June 10, 1918.

widely known as well as the most Anglicized. He came from a Malayalam-speaking Kerala family with some experience in government service.[85] After taking medical training in Madras and going on for advanced study at Edinburgh, he established a practice in Madras. He became known as a physician, journalist, social reformer, and politician. Shortly after the turn of the century he became a Municipal Councillor for the Madras Corporation; he gave lectures on municipal government in 1906 and again in 1915,[86] and in 1912 he was elected to the Madras Legislative Council. His early journalistic attempts appeared in the *Kerala Patrika*,[87] and later in the *Madras Standard*, then under the editorship of G. Parameshwaran Pillai.[88] For a number of years Dr. Nair himself edited the *Madras Standard*.

Though Dr. Nair participated fully in the public life of Madras, he retained and cultivated his contacts with England, and his style of life marked him as an up-and-coming British-trained professional, with ambitions for fame and success.[89] After he joined

[85] He was born in Tirur in 1868. His father had been a lawyer in Calicut and later became a district munsif. His elder brother was a deputy collector. S. A. Somasundaram Pillai, *Dr. H. M. Nair, M.D.* (Madura, 1920), p. 2.

[86] The second of these lecture series was published under the title, *Principles and Practice of Municipal Government* (Madras, 1916).

[87] Speech by Dr. Nair before the Madras Shorthand Writers' Association. *Madras Mail*, Feb. 8, 1916.

[88] Parameshwaran Pillai became editor of the *Madras Standard* in 1892 and was soon famous for his journalistic skills. Many of the sketches published in his book *Representative Men of Southern India* (Madras, 1896) appeared originally in the *Madras Standard*. Nair's friendship with Parameshwaran Pillai dated from at least 1897. See Keraliyan, *The Father of Political Agitation in Travancore: G. Parameshwaran Pillai* (Trivandrum, 1948); and Somasundaram Pillai, *Dr. T. M. Nair, M.D.*, p. 8.

[89] Likewise Dr. Nair felt the terrors of being an Indian in late nineteenth-century England — not unlike Gandhi's taking to dancing and the violin. He was especially sensitive about wearing a *dhoti*. Karunakaran Menon described Dr. Nair's departure for England in 1889 when "a few of us took a group photo . . . A lady in England on seeing the photo enquired whether he had been once in petticoats and on that he tore the photo to

the Cosmopolitan Club in Madras city, his capacity both to captivate and to persuade were immediately noticed by his friends. His command of English was particularly remarkable, and he was in great demand as a speaker. All Dr. Nair's capacities found their greatest expression in his leadership of the Justice Party. His connections with England and his ability to speak forcibly were of critical importance in the demand for communal representation from Parliament.

Nair's trip to London in 1918 to place before all who would listen to him the demands of Madras non-Brahmans was symbolic of the effect that Montagu's mission had had on south India. Various groups claimed the position of sole representative for the non-Brahmans, and those who were politically conscious split into pro- and anti-Home Rule camps. It was true that Montagu's visit to Madras had helped to quiet the fears aroused in the British nonofficial community by his release of Mrs. Besant, while raising the hopes of Indians that the Secretary of State might be truly sympathetic to their reactions. But however interested Montagu was in assisting the development of a sense of political responsibility among Indian politicians and in urging a British bureaucracy to narrow the gulf between it and those whom it governed, he could never hope to reconcile all these interests, nor could he hope to satisfy them.

pieces not to keep it any longer, as evidence of the garb in which he had been at that time dressed." *Hindu*, July 28, 1919.

Chapter 4

GRANTING THE REFORMS: REACTIONS TO THE MONTAGU-CHELMSFORD REPORT, 1918-1919

The Montagu–Chelmsford *Report on Indian Constitutional Reforms* was published on July 2, 1918, in fulfillment of Montagu's pledge made in the Commons in August of the previous year. In the *Report*, Montagu and Chelmsford committed the British government to the principle of increased participation by Indians in the administration of India, by means of a constitutional system called dyarchy. The *Report* set out a number of general principles in connection with the new franchise system, but, except for the Sikhs and the Muslims, it disallowed the use of communal representation for any other Indian group. Publication of the *Report* with its denial of the method of representation that had been one of the central demands of the Justice Party boded ill for the efforts of south Indian non-Brahmans to obtain a privileged political position.

But in the attempt by Dr. Nair and other important members of the Justice Party first in 1918 and later in 1919 to reverse the decision on communal representation, a number of forces came to their assistance. They were helped, for instance, by the process by which the constitutional reforms were to be implemented, for the *Report* only laid down the general principles that Montagu and Chelmsford believed should be incorporated into the new scheme. The detailed working out of the new franchise system and the exact division of the functions of government were left to two important government committees, the Southborough and

Feetham committees, to decide. And the final decision on the precise nature of the reforms would depend on Parliament and on its Select Committee. The intricacies of the legislative process thus gave the Justice Party the requisite time and opportunity to canvass for support—from certain reactionary groups in England, from the Government of Madras, and from the Government of India. Dr. Nair, already in England by the time the *Report* was issued, was to solicit support for the non-Brahman cause and prepare the way for a favorable reception of Justice Party claims.

The Justice Party could expect to acquire a measure of support in England, especially since the publication of the Montagu-Chelmsford *Report* intensified feelings and enhanced the opposition to Montagu and the principles that he was thought to represent. Criticism of the *Report* was not confined to men in public life in England, but came also from governmental and political circles in India, in the provinces as well as in Delhi. Hostility to the *Report* and to Montagu's hopes and ideals must be seen against the background of a Britain just emerging from a World War, where the war and European affairs took first place in the minds of politicians. The policies of the Justice Party and Dr. Nair must also be thought of in terms of the political events in India, where the Khilafat movement, the Rowlatt agitation, and the Amritsar tragedy all combined to create a new dynamism in Indian nationalism which left the Justice Party with its provincial demands more and more isolated.

Seen in this context, Dr. Nair's propagandistic efforts were symbolic of the remarkably provincial role that the Justice Party played in all-India politics. Compared with the ferment that existed beneath the surface in the Indian National Congress, the Justice ideology was settled, its leadership secure. Moreover, since the Justice Party was committed to the retention of British rule in India, and since Dr. Nair himself had articulated a constitutional framework that bore a strong resemblance to the one Montagu and Chelmsford

finally proposed, there were few unresolved alternatives remaining in its future program.

The Montagu–Chelmsford Report

Although the strain was beginning to ease, Britain was still involved in the many serious preoccupations of the war when Dr. Nair reached London in mid-June. On his arrival he was met by a military officer and was asked to sign a statement promising that he would not address any public meetings or engage in any political propaganda so long as the war continued.[1] Ironically, he was rescued from his pledge by the publication of the *Report on Indian Constitutional Reforms* three weeks later.

Commonly referred to as the Montagu–Chelmsford *Report*[2] because it was signed by both the Secretary of State of India and the Viceroy, the document provoked a great deal of discussion in the daily as well as the monthly press, and in political meetings, a reaction which the authors of the *Report* had themselves encouraged: "Our proposals can only benefit by reasoned criticism both in England and India, official and non-official alike."[3] Interest in the *Report* together with the appeal of its authors for constructive criticism forced the hand of the British government in its treatment of Dr. Nair. On July 31, in a debate in the House of Lords, three former governors of Indian provinces, Lords Lammington, Sydenham, and Carmichael, urged the government to allow Dr. Nair to speak as he wished. Sydenham went as far

[1] N. Gopala Menon, *A Short Sketch of the Life of Dr. T. M. Nair* (Madras, 1920), p. 31. The Government of India also issued a communique stating that Nair had signed the declaration and had promised to return to India on the completion of his medical treatment. *Hindu*, July 4, 1918.

[2] Great Britain, Parliamentary Papers, Vol. VIII (*Reports from Commissioners, Inspectors, etc.*, Vol. IV), Cd. 9109, July, 1918, "Report on Indian Constitutional Reforms," pp. 113–423. Hereafter this document will be cited as the Montagu–Chelmsford *Report*. It was signed by the two men in Delhi on April 22, 1918.

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 281.

as to contend that Dr. Nair was the only Indian in England who could speak for the working classes of India, "whose views and aspirations we never hear."[4] On the following day, Dr. Nair was in fact freed from the conditions of the declaration that he had signed upon his arrival, and on August 2 he took advantage of his new freedom to address a group of members of both Houses of Parliament. He criticized the *Report* for recommending "individual voting" for the Legislative Councils, since it could only result in an "excessive over-representation of Brahmins."[5] Instead, Dr. Nair, as before, urged communal representation for non-Brahmans in Madras presidency and a franchise whereby only non-Brahmans would be permitted to vote for non-Brahman candidates in the Provincial Legislative Councils, as had been the case of the Muslims under the Morley–Minto Reforms of 1909.

The *Report* was against communal representation as being a bad general principle on which to build a constitution: not only was it contrary to the lessons of history, but also it would stereotype existing relationships among caste groups. After all, if a device like communal representation was set up to divide Indians "at the very moment when it [a constitution] professes to start them on the road to governing themselves, it [the British Government] will find it difficult to meet the charge of being hypocritical or short-sighted."[6] Any group that was granted any form of communal or special representation in the franchise scheme, the *Report* maintained, would be "positively encouraged" to settle down into a feeling of complacency and would be under no pressure to "educate and qualify itself" for unaided participation in democratic elections. In any event, nothing could be said in favor of communal representation that would pass the test to which all constitutional proposals should be subjected, "whether

[4] Great Britain, 5 *Parliamentary Debates* (Lords), XXXI (1918), 241.
[5] *Madras Mail*, Aug. 8, 1918.
[6] Montagu–Chelmsford *Report*, p. 187.

they will or will not help to carry India towards responsible government."[7]

The *Report* suggested that the avenue to responsible government in India should be through what came to be known as "dyarchy," a scheme originally proposed by Lionel Curtis, who had been influenced by the theories of the Durham Report of 1838.[8] Though the *Report* rejected some of Curtis's ideas, it accepted the central concept of a division of functions of government in the provinces between the official half of the government, represented by an irremovable bureaucracy responsible to Delhi and ultimately to Parliament, and the nonofficial half of the government responsible to an Indian elected majority in the Provincial Legislative Councils. The official half of the government was to have control of "reserved" subjects such as defense, police, and land revenue, and the nonofficial half was to control the "transferred" subjects, such as local self-government, education, and sanitation, these being functions where action by an Indian minister would not be "irreparable" and would not endanger the peace or prosperity of the country. In each province the Governor would perform an essential role in harmonizing the two halves.

One of Curtis's ideas which the *Report* rejected was that of dividing up India into racial or linguistic groups. Montagu, for one, felt that, since "provincial patriotism . . . [was] sensitively jealous of its territorial integrity,"[9] such a division would mean

[7] *Ibid.*, p. 186.

[8] For an account of the way in which the Montagu–Chelmsford scheme took shape, see the article by Dietmar Rothermund, "Constitutional Reforms versus National Agitation in India, 1900–1950," *Journal of Asian Studies*, XXI (August, 1962), 508–509. Curtis's ideas are set out in two books: *Letters to the People of India on Responsible Government* (2d ed.; London, 1918), and *Papers Relating to the Application of the Principle of Dyarchy to the Government of India* (Oxford, 1920).

[9] Montagu had early in his trip to India questioned the use of this device. In his *Diary* he noted, "For myself, it seems to me more and more obvious

the end of a united India. Nonetheless, Montagu and Chelmsford chose the province as the unit in which to "create an electorate which will control the government,"[10] because, as Montagu put it in the Commons debate on the second reading of the India Bill on June 5, 1919, "you are not writing on a clear, clean slate."[11] In some measure, the scheme of the *Report* was dictated by what Montagu referred to as the "great educational results" of the Morley–Minto Reforms. In the debate in the House of Commons Montagu concluded that "it is to the provinces that we go," since the provinces were beginning to be the units of "local patriotism in India." And though he had not favored the division of India into linguistic or racial units, he finally admitted that the Reforms would presume the granting of some provincial autonomy, if only as the best means whereby an electorate could be politically educated.

This admission, however expedient, was extremely important so far as the Justice Party was concerned, for by using the province as the area in which an electorate was to be educated, Montagu was allowing the Justice Party — a party committed to the use of the Reforms — ample opportunity to increase its provincial role. Since the new constitution gave power to Indian politicians only

every day that his [Curtis's] attempt to confuse geographical rearrangement of India with constitutional reform is doomed to failure." *An Indian Diary*, entry for Nov. 24, 1917, p. 54. The threat of Curtis's stealing Montagu's thunder seems always to have haunted the Secretary of State. See *ibid.*, entry for Dec. 24, 1917, p. 141. Montagu's fears were not in vain. *The Times*, on June 3, 1919, wrote editorially: "The principle of dualism is the invention of Mr. Lionel Curtis, who went to the East to study Indian problems, of which he had no previous experience. Mr. Montagu went out on a similar mission, rather puzzled to know what to do. He came into contact with the ardent and fertile mind of Mr. Curtis, followed his principle thought in his method, and thus the Bill was made." The scheme's position on Curtis's suggestion can be found in the Montagu–Chelmsford *Report*, p. 200.

[10] Great Britain, 5 *Parliamentary Debates* (Commons), CXVI (1919), 2302.

[11] *Ibid.*, col. 2303.

in provincial matters, the Brahman–non-Brahman conflict in Madras presidency was certain to be exaggerated, and the Justice Party, as an organization geared to provincial needs and aspirations, could utilize the Montagu–Chelmsford Reforms to enhance its political position.

Besides giving a measure of responsibility to the provinces, the Reform scheme also proposed Indianizing the Indian Civil Service as a way of training a group of competent Indian administrators capable of assuming the increased responsibility that would come their way under the policy of "devolution." The *Report* also proposed a new administrative role for British I.C.S. officers. They would be answerable to both halves of the proposed provincial governments — to the official half, that is, the Governor and the Executive Council, and to the unofficial half, all of whom would be Indians. Anticipating criticism of this proposal, the *Report* said: "The objection may be taken that the same authority may not be felt to attach to orders coming from Indian ministers as to orders coming from the executive council. We do not admit that they will come from either. All orders will come from the Government, and they will be Government orders."[12] There would be many challenges and difficulties for the I.C.S. and its future recruits from Britain, but the *Report* was hopeful: "Life will indeed be more difficult; it will not be less worthy. It is harder to convince than to direct; to prevail in consultation than to enforce an order. But can there be a higher calling for the service than to train in the years that are to come men who are to relieve them of much of their burden?"[13] There was no doubt but that a long period of transition and uncertainty lay ahead for the district officer.

Transition was, in fact, the key to the entire mechanism of government as suggested by the *Report*. The new scheme would have to satisfy Indian and English opinion, to reconcile a responsi-

[12] Montagu–Chelmsford *Report*, p. 210.
[13] *Ibid*., pp. 259–260.

ble with a bureaucratic system of government; it would have to respect the wishes of the Government of India and those of the provincial governments; and it would have to maintain the efficiency of the administration in India. Montagu and Chelmsford contended therefore that a function of that quality of transition was expressed in the "dualism in the executive" and also in providing a "balance of power between the two portions" which would allow one to grow and prosper while not disabling the other "from discharging its very necessary functions of preserving continuity and safeguarding essentials."[14]

British Reactions to the Report

The rejection of the general application of communal electorates, the insistence on a dual executive, and the Indianizing of the I.C.S. were the three features of the *Report* most attacked by British critics. A fourth criticism, mostly from reactionary circles, had to do with the provision for a large elected majority in the Provincial Councils. Unfortunately, reactionary groups were more vocal than liberal ones, which, ignorant of, if not indifferent to, conditions in India, failed to give Montagu the kind of support and discussion he had hoped for. Montagu was fully aware of the situation. Writing to Lord Chelmsford in September, 1918, he said, "I am in a very difficult position. It is so disheartening to find that lack of interest in Indian affairs, excused now because of the preoccupations of the war but I am afraid always present, is one of our greatest obstacles."[15]

In England, as in Madras, there was an alliance between the

[14] *Ibid.*, p. 183. Montagu reiterated this in his formal presentation of the India Bill to the Commons on June 5, 1919. "This procedure," he said, "would be absolutely indefensible if it were not for the fact that at stated periods it is proposed to hold a Parliamentary inquiry into its working, with a view to further stages." Great Britain, 5 *Parliamentary Debates* (Commons), CXVI (1919), 2307–2308.

[15] Montagu to Chelmsford, Sept. 5, 1918; quoted in S. D. Waley, *Edwin Montagu*, p. 176.

Justice Party and reactionary and racist British opinion. The chief proponent of the India-for-Britain cry was the Indo-British Association, which had been founded by Lord Sydenham, the former governor of Bombay, in October, 1917. The avowed purpose of the association was "to oppose all measures, tending to destroy or weaken the paramount authority of British rule in India or to transfer power to a small oligarchy unrepresentative of the masses of the Indian people and having interests opposed to those of the masses."[16] Two well-known members of the Indian Civil Service, Sir John Hewett and Sir Francis Younghusband, and a retired Madras missionary from the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, the Reverend John A. Sharrock, were on the Executive Committee. It received considerable support from papers like the *Madras Mail* and *Justice* in Madras,[17] and it is likely that it was financed by British firms with interests in India.[18] To further its aims, the Association published in 1917 and 1918 a great number of pamphlets, on such subjects as *Indian Opposition to Home Rule: What the British Public Ought to Know; Indian Problems: Caste in Relation to Democracy;*[19] *Indian Oligarchy and Demo-*

[16] *The Times* (London), Dec. 10, 1917. A brief announcement of its aims appeared the very next day in the *Madras Mail.*

[17] The *Madras Mail* on January 24, 1918, suggested how one could help the Indo-British Association: "Let our readers make it a habit during the next few months of sending such acquaintances brief definite particulars about the Home Rule Movement, together with cuttings from this and other papers. Vague denunciation of Home Rule is worthless for the purposes of propaganda. What is needed is the concrete fact."

[18] "The Indo-British Association," wrote the *Madras Mail* (Jan. 28, 1919), "has represented contributions as, in effect the premia on insurance on menaced interests. Efficient administration, peace and good will between all communities in India are the conditions of commercial prosperity in this country, and it is therefore, mere business prudence for merchants in London having investments in India to do all in their power to secure the continuance of these conditions."

[19] It seems probable, partly from internal evidence, that this pamphlet was written for the Indo-British Association by Dr. Nair. George Sydenham

cratic Ideals; and *What Home Rule Means to the Lower Classes of India.* Most of these contained long extracts from *Justice* and other Indian newspapers, for the benefit of those in England who, in the words of one pamphlet, might be "misled by the agitation of a small Brahman and upper-class minority" into believing that all India wanted democratic government.[20] One long quotation, for example, from a letter written by an Indian to *Justice,* asserted that Indians did not want to be ruled by Indians because they had no confidence in their impartiality, and that Indians were not good administrators. Indeed, India was hardly a nation at all "when every province is for itself, when Bengal is for Bengalis, when Travancore is for Travancoreans, when Mysore is for Mysoreans" and when increased racial antagonism is apparent everywhere.[21]

The East India Association was another voluntary organization of the conservative persuasion. It was much older than the Indo-British Association, having been founded in 1866, and less reactionary. It was particularly interested in stimulating opinion, and held regular meetings at which papers were read by members, many of whom were former I.C.S. officers or missionaries to India. It also published a quarterly journal.

Aside from these two organizations and a few others of lesser importance, Montagu's opposition came from a number of individuals who had a specialized knowledge of India. He had to contend with a great deal of private pressure from his colleague in the cabinet, Lord Curzon, the former Viceroy of India. Curzon had serious misgivings about the nature of the proposed Indian constitution. "Why," he asked Montagu, "is it necessary to proceed at breakneck speed in a case that constitutes a revolution of which

Clarke Sydenham, *My Working Life* (London, 1927), notes, p. 370 n.: "Dr. Nair, at my request, had written a leaflet for the Indo-British Association in which his views are recorded."

[20] *Indian Opposition to Home Rule: What the British Public Ought to Know* (London, 1918?), p. 3.

[21] *Ibid.*, pp. 32–35.

not one person in a thousand in this country realizes the magnitude, and which will probably lead by stages of increasing speed to the ultimate disruption of the Empire?"[22] Curzon's irritation at Montagu's handling of the Reforms legislation continued throughout the summer of 1918; Montagu commented that one of his daily tasks was to write a letter to Curzon on Indian affairs, and that every day Curzon appeared to be critical of one thing or another.[23] That Montagu received little or no support from the Cabinet in the waning days of the war is everywhere apparent. In a letter to Lord Chelmsford he said, "I cannot pretend to be happy about our reforms scheme. I must tell you quite frankly that there is very little driving force behind it in this country."[24]

For the public at large, perhaps the most famous critic of the Reforms scheme was Vincent Smith. In a work entitled *Indian Constitutional Reform Viewed in the Light of History*, which was published early in 1919, Smith sought to analyze the *Report* in terms of its applicability to the late nineteenth-century India with which he had been familiar. His conclusions, as might have been expected, were remarkably similar to those of Dr. Nair and the Indo-British Association. Smith criticized dyarchy, for instance, because it was a system of divided government that completely neglected what he liked to think was the Indian tradition of kingship: "Ninety-nine out of a hundred Indians, whether Hindus or Muhammadans, cherish as their ideal of government that of a virtuous Raja, who works hard, is easily accessible, is sternly and impartially just, yet loves his children, and is guided by the advice of wise ministers based upon immemorial tradition."[25] It was

[22] Curzon to Montagu, late July, 1918, quoted in Waley, *Edwin Montagu*, p. 173.

[23] Montagu to Chelmsford, June 15, 1918, quoted in *ibid.*, p. 165.

[24] Montagu to Chelmsford, July 26, 1918, quoted in *ibid.*, p. 175.

[25] Vincent A. Smith, *Indian Constitutional Reform Viewed in the Light of History* (London, 1919), p. 21. Sydenham said the same thing in another way six years before: "We must unflinchingly enforce law and order, realizing that misplaced leniency may be cruel in the long run by encour-

Smith's contention that one of the *Report*'s chief defects was its failure to say anything about the King-Emperor who could command the loyalty of Indians who were divided by language, caste, and race. To his way of thinking, this "heartfelt loyalty" could never be "quenched by the cold water of democratic theory." He also used the familiar argument that without the British government all the pent-up hatred and discontent which were a function of warring tribes and castes would be turned on the English as the "casteless, impure foreigner" and India would see a repetition of the "horrors of 1857 or the great anarchy of the eighteenth century."[26]

If Smith felt unhappy about the proposed dyarchic system of government, he was even more bitter about Indianizing the I.C.S. Though India needed the training, ability and "notable tradition" of the I.C.S. to carry forward these reforms, the conditions under which an I.C.S. officer would have to work under the new constitution would preclude the possibility of good recruits joining the service.[27] Furthermore, in so far as the I.C.S. represented the unifying power of the British position in India, this compromise of their skills and organized control would lead to "old fashioned scenes of bloodshed," for a service which felt itself to be superfluous would be unable to maintain law and order.[28] Worst of all, the Reforms by recruiting 33 percent of the service in India, and

aging outbreaks in the suppression of which the lives of harmless persons will inevitably be sacrificed." *The Times* (London), Dec. 23, 1913.

[26] Smith, *Indian Constitutional Reform*, pp. 22–23, 50. Smith was very indignant: "Do the high officials charged with the government of India who propose deliberately to disturb the continent of three hundred millions of Asiatic people, mostly ignorant, superstitious, fanatical, and intensely suspicious, realize what they are doing?"

[27] *Ibid.*, p. 109.

[28] *Ibid.*, pp. 29, 71–74. Cf. Sydenham: "The only link between the countless jarring elements of India, and the only force which can maintain the general peace is the impartial and passionless rule of Britain." George Sydenham Clarke Sydenham, "Danger in India," *Nineteenth Century and After*, LXXX (December, 1916), 1124.

by increasing that percentage by one and a half percent yearly would introduce, according to Smith, "Fresh racial discrimination in a novel form *against Europeans and persons of European descent.*"[29]

Smith was by no means alone in his fears concerning the fate that would befall the I.C.S. once the reformed constitution was brought into operation. Perhaps the most reactionary London daily, the *Morning Post*, remarked that if the Montagu–Chelmsford proposals were carried to their conclusion they would make the life of the British civil officer in India "intolerable."[30] It was preposterous to suppose that under the new scheme an I.C.S. career would be more worthy, and to ask I.C.S. officers to train Indians in the tasks which until then had been almost entirely the preserve of Britishers was an impossible request. "The members of the I.C.S. are, in fact to educate their successors and take pride in preparing for their own extinction. Noble role for an Imperial race!"[31]

But it was neither the Indianizing of the I.C.S. nor the "dualism" of the new constitution that aroused the most comment. It was, rather, the fact that the *Report* had refused to accept the principle of communal representation as a basis for the Indian constitution. For the Justice Party this reaction was useful because it permitted it to plead its case before those who questioned whether a constitution that did not employ the wholesale use of communal electorates could in fact represent Indian feelings and aspirations. If communal representation was to be rejected, these critics said, the franchise widened, and the provincial Legislative Councils composed of a sizable elected majority, there could be only one result: the fortunes of India would be handed over to a group of politicians — an oligarchy — totally unrepresentative of Indian desires. Many believed that this oligarchy would be composed of Brahmans.

[29] Smith, *Indian Constitutional Reform*, p. 72.
[30] *Morning Post*, July 6, 1918. [31] *Ibid.*, July 9, 1918.

A number of factors were responsible for the growth of Brahmanophobia in Britain, many of which were apparent long before the Montagu–Chelmsford *Report* was even read. Charles Grant in the late eighteenth century in his famous *Observations on the State of Society among the Asiatic Subjects of Great Britain, Particularly with Respect to Morals*,[32] James Mill in the early nineteenth century in his *History of British India*,[33] and even Sir John Kaye's *A History of the Sepoy War in India, 1857–58*[34] all sought to show that Brahmans were crafty, untrustworthy, and antithetical to the kind of governmental or social reforms that the British sought to introduce. There also appeared in the early twentieth century, in the years immediately preceding the discussions about India's constitutional future in 1918–1919, at least three elements that contributed forcefully to the image of the Brahman as an untrustworthy politician. The first, in 1910, was a book called *Indian Unrest*, a compilation of dispatches from India by a *Times* correspondent, Valentine Chirol. Chirol, a perceptive but not altogether sympathetic observer, considered that the main forces hostile to British supremacy in India were Brahmanism and the influence of Western education, the unnatural alliance of which posed a dangerous and formidable threat to the British *raj*.[35]

[32] Charles Grant, "Observations on the State of Society Among the Asiatic Subjects of Great Britain, particularly with respect to Morals, and on the means of improving it." Great Britain, *Parliamentary Papers*, 1812–1813, X, Paper 282, pp. 1–112.

[33] James Mill, *History of British India* (London, 1840), II, 186–189.

[34] John Kaye, *A History of the Sepoy War in India, 1857–58* (London, 1880), I, 180–184.

[35] Chirol made the "unnaturalness" very clear in 1918 when he said that "None recognized more fully the dangers with which . . . [the Chitpavan Brahmans] threatened the cause of orderly progress in India than my friend the late Mr. Gokhale, whose premature death is believed by many to have been hastened by the fight he was putting up in 1915 against the Deccani extremists, who he had successfully defeated at the memorable Congress session at Surat at the end of 1907. Yet, he was himself of the Chitpavan Brahman caste, which has, indeed, produced both the best and the worst

Chirol's dispatches were read either in *The Times* or in their book form both by people who were influential in creating opinion on India and by those who actually wielded authority over Indian affairs. Lord Sydenham, for example, admitted that he had been deeply influenced by Chirol's book.[36] Mrs. Besant's Home Rule movement, the second factor in the growth of hostility toward Brahmans, had an even more profound influence on Sydenham: he founded the Indo-British Association a little more than a month after Mrs. Besant's release from internment specifically to combat what he thought were the effects of her activities. Of all the groups and individuals who nurtured Brahmanophobia at this time, Lord Sydenham and the Indo-British Association were the most important. It was they who sought to bring into currency the idea that Mrs. Besant's advisers were a group of Brahman politicians anxious to gain power and to oppress the Panchamas, who Lord Sydenham liked to think could only achieve some kind of equality under the protection of the British.

But what helped to convince those who were perhaps already prejudiced or who had not previously thought of the connection between Brahmans and violent political activity in India was the publication in England, in October, 1918, of the so-called *Rowlatt Report*.[37] The report was written by a committee appointed in late 1917 by the Government of India to investigate the causes of political violence and to recommend means whereby it could be controlled. The means the committee employed to fulfill its task was to analyze the terrorist movement in India which preceded and continued into the World War. From a casual glance at the

types of Western educated Indians." Letter to the Editor, *The Times* (London), Aug. 9, 1918.

[36] See his article in *ibid.*, Dec. 22, 1913.

[37] Great Britain, Parliamentary Papers, Vol. VIII (*Reports from Commissioners, Inspectors, etc.*, Vol. IV), Cd. 9190, October, 1918, "Report of Committee Appointed to Investigate Revolutionary Conspiracies in India." Judge Rowlatt was chairman of the committee.

contents of the Rowlatt Report, one could easily conclude that it was the Brahman and the Brahman alone who was behind unconstitutional agitation in India. The introduction to the report, for instance, which describes the effects the British take-over in 1818 had had on the Brahman-dominated Maratha kingdom, says bluntly (p. 9) that in the days following the British conquest "the Brahmins were employed by the British in the subordinate administration, but they had lost their commanding influence, and a certain discontent and longing for a return to power naturally remained." From the point of view of the Rowlatt Committee, revolutionary conspiracy in Bombay at least was "purely Brahmin and mostly Chitpavan" (p. 75), and in other provinces as well Brahmans played an important role in fomenting and carrying out revolutionary crime.

Chirol's book, Mrs. Besant's Home Rule agitation, and the report of the Rowlatt Committee all in one way or another illustrated to those in England who concerned themselves with Indian affairs the direct connection between a priestly, exclusive caste and political agitation, sometimes of a terrorist variety. And all this evidence assisted those who wanted to use communal representation to break Brahman social and political power. Nationalism, these advocates of communal representation argued, had not decreased caste consciousness but enhanced it and had caused a great revival of Hinduism.[38] One of the Indo-British Association pamphlets (perhaps written by Dr. Nair) contended that the Code of Manu, on which Hinduism was based, had "imposed on India centuries ago" a "system of selfishness, monstrous injustice, and cruelty." This system, known as caste, represented the "racial antagonism of the Aryan Brahman toward the dark-skinned original inhabitants of India."[39] And the Brahmans had devised the

[38] See Smith, *Indian Constitutional Reform*, p. 41, and T. M. Nair, "An Indian's View of the Indian Problem," *Nineteenth Century and After*, LXXXIV (September, 1918), 424.

[39] *Indian Problems: Caste in Relation to Democracy* (London, 1918), pp. 4, 6.

Code of Manu in order to keep the dark-skinned original inhabitants, some of whom came to be called Sudras, under their control, to be bought and sold like slaves. In an article in the *Edinburgh Review*, Dr. Nair wrote that "The Brahmins toiled not, neither did they spin. The sweated slaves supplied them with everything, and they in their turn cultivated 'spirituality' . . . And since India passed out of Brahmanical power the Brahmins have been whining."[40]

The views of the Reverend John A. Sharrock represented another approach to Brahman supremacy in religious and political affairs in south India. Sharrock's experiences as a missionary in the Tamil country for over a quarter of a century gave him a rich, but biased, knowledge. For example, in one article he wrote:

> As time went on, the Brahmans, who now form the bulk of the Aryans in the South of India, covered the peninsula with their missionaries. They did not, of course, find India from the religious point of view a blank page; for the Dravidians and aborigines all had their own separate cults, chiefly animistic. But the Brahmans were quite satisfied if they could get their hearers to accept two propositions: first, the divine right of the Brahmans, and secondly, the naming of their respective gods, according to the names of the Brahmanic Pantheon.[41]

Sharrock, even in 1910, had warned that the Brahmans through their high social position and their tradition for learning were able to take advantage of Western education and foment sedition. The assumptions and principles that maintained the Brahmans in their high social position were, he thought, incompatible with the principle of equality, which was a prerequisite to the establishment of democratic institutions. But though he was convinced that the future of India lay with "the great mass of Sudras," he

[40] T. M. Nair, "Caste and Democracy," *Edinburgh Review*, CCXVIII (October, 1918), 356.

[41] Rev. John A. Sharrock, "Caste as a Factor in Indian Reform," *Asiatic Review*, XV (July, 1919), 406.

nevertheless believed that it was perhaps not the Brahmans themselves so much as the caste system that was to blame for the condition into which India had fallen.[42] In a letter to *The Times* (Sept. 4, 1918) he commented: "Many of the Brahmans deplore the evils of caste and would be glad to abolish them. But our part, as protectors of the weak, is to take care that we do not hand over the non-Brahmans, body and soul, to this system, or by our laws actually push them under the Jaganathancar of caste to be crushed to death by its merciless wheels."[43] Dr. Nair had no such faith in the Brahmans' dislike of the evils of the caste system. On the contrary, he believed that "if the Brahmans while still cherishing their sense of caste superiority obtain power which the Montagu–Chelmsford *Report* would place in their hands, the chances are that the code of Manu, revised and brought up to date, will come into full operation once again."[44]

No matter what political reforms were to be introduced, the critics of the *Report* argued, the Brahman would always remain at the top of the caste hierarchy, "fed, cherished, protected, and honoured by his inferiors . . . be he prince or peasant."[45] Social change, gradually introduced by an impartial British administration, was the only way by which these critics believed any measure of social equality could be achieved. "I have said—and I say it again," Flora Annie Steel, novelist of India, announced at a meeting of the Indo-British Association, "that when I see a Brahmin gentlemen teaching in a sweepers' school I will consider responsible government."[46]

[42] Rev. John A. Sharrock, *South Indian Missions, Containing Glimpses into the Lives and Customs of the Tamil People* (Westminster, 1910), pp. 217–218, 228.

[43] For other statements on the caste system, see John A. Sharrock, *Hinduism Ancient and Modern Viewed in the Light of the Incarnation* (London, 1913).

[44] Nair, "Caste and Democracy," p. 361.

[45] Smith, *Indian Constitutional Reform*, p. 37.

[46] *Madras Mail*, Sept. 24, 1918.

Even some of those with a firsthand knowledge of Indian conditions and a more liberal political outlook considered that the reforms would enhance Brahman supremacy. Sir J. D. Rees, for example—the only member of the House of Commons who had served with the Indian Civil Service either in Madras presidency or in the princely states of Travancore or Cochin—was quite aware of Brahman superiority in south India, but he was unwilling to accept the need for the imposition of constitutional checks upon Brahmans. In a letter to the *Morning Post* (July 13, 1918), Rees wrote in no uncertain terms that the main purpose of British government in south India had been to train Indians for "liberty," which had been carefully explained as being "synonymous with democratic government, and now the children have grown up and ask for it, can we say, 'No, it is not for you, our principles are camouflage; you must not take us seriously.'"[47] Elsewhere he commented that the Reforms would place the Brahman, and particularly the Brahman lawyer, in "the position he has held under all the indigenous and foreign rulers India has ever known."[48] If the Brahmans were placed in a position of power and position, this was not something to be unhappy about. Rather, Rees argued that the Brahmans were, after all, "an aristocracy of intellect and birth" which was a good credential for their capacity to administer through an oligarchical form of government under the proposed reforms.[49] Though a few other M.P.s agreed with

[47] He went on to say, "Just when our public men are protesting, perhaps like the lady, too much, that we are fighting to make the world safe for democracy and for the destruction of all despotic, autocratic, and bureaucratic systems of government! Is this a tenable position?" See also the remarks of Montagu before the Cambridge Liberal Club, *Morning Post*, July 29, 1918, and those of Henry Whitehead, Bishop of Madras, in "India After the War," *Nineteenth Century and After*, LXXX (August, 1916), 267.

[48] J. D. Rees, "The Indian Problem: Indicus Expectans," *ibid.*, LXXXIV (August, 1918), 388.

[49] Great Britain, 5 *Parliamentary Debates* (Commons), CIX (1918), 1172.

Rees on the grounds that "the anti-Brahmin agitation is being very much overdone,"[50] the general feeling was that expressed by one member of Parliament when he concluded that "we cannot put it [communal representation] aside until we have heard a great deal more on the subject."[51]

Opposition to a possible transfer of power to a Brahman elite was not confined to Parliament or to the more reactionary forces in British politics but extended to members of the Liberal and National Democratic and Labour parties. One correspondent for the unofficial Liberal journal on imperial affairs, *Round Table*, wrote from India in mid-1918 that in the same way as the Brahmans had almost eliminated Buddhism in India, they now "believed that in times to come there will be little trace of us [the British]."[52] Claud Mullins, writing in the *British Citizen*, a National Democratic and Labour Party paper, completely agreed with the *Round Table* correspondent, and pointed out that Brahmans held a social pre-eminence "to which the most bigoted Tory has never aspired,"[53] but that they were now conscious that their superior status was threatened by British rule. Mullins asserted that the crucial point, however, was that Brahman politicians were trading on the gullibility of the Labourites in England, their ignorance of Indian conditions, and the fact that they were preoccupied with domestic problems.[54] "Is British Labour going to help the Brahmins to keep their hold over the Indian people? . . . But by supporting Home Rule for India now that is just what British Labour will do . . . Surely the sympathies of British Labour will be with the underdog—the millions over whom the

[50] *Ibid.*, col. 1181.

[51] *Ibid.*, col. 1187.

[52] "Indian Politics," *Round Table*, VIII (June, 1918), 594.

[53] Claude Mullins, "British Labour and Indian Home Rule," Pt. 4, *British Citizen*, VI, No. 140 (Apr. 24, 1919), 227.

[54] Mullins, "British Labour and Indian Home Rule," Pt. 1, *ibid.*, No. 137 (Apr. 3, 1919), 183.

Brahmin aristocrats tyrannise."[55] Dr. Nair in his *Edinburgh Review* article answered that it would be disastrous to neglect the many divisions in Indian society, and to hand over power in India under the new reforms to Brahmans so that constitutionally India could be "made into a whited sepulchre with a fair exterior but full of dead men's bones within."[56] Lord Sydenham and many other critics of the *Report* agreed that the Brahmans as a "denationalised intelligentsia"[57] would be unrepresentative of the vast bulk of the Indian population.

These opinions were quickly relayed to India, where they were taken seriously as representative of educated attitudes in Britain toward India's future. The *Hindu*, though not itself misled, was

[55] Mullins, "British Labour and Indian Home Rule," Pt. 3, *ibid.*, No. 139 (Apr. 17, 1919), 215.

[56] Nair, "Caste and Democracy," p. 370.

[57] Lord Sydenham, speaking in the Lords Debate on the Montagu–Chelmsford proposals, Great Britain, 5 *Parliamentary Debates* (Lords), XXXI (1918), 559. Smith said that "The Franchise will be used unwillingly and sparingly [with the result] that electioneering will fall chiefly into the hands of glib lawyers, and that the mass of voters will be as clay in the hands of the potter" (*Indian Constitutional Reform*, p. 56). There is no doubt that Montagu was very much attracted to south Indian Brahmans like S. Srinivasa Sastri and C. P. Ramaswami Iyer, the latter of whom he described as "one of the cleverest men I have ever met in my life" (*An Indian Diary*, entry for Dec. 20, 1917, p. 123). Montagu also liked C. Y. Chintamani, a Telugu Brahman, who edited the Allahabad *Leader*; he described him as "an extraordinarily intelligent man, I think the cleverest Indian in debate I have yet seen" (*ibid.*, entry for Nov. 20, 1917, p. 48). But he was also painfully aware of what the words "denationalised intelligentsia" and "glib lawyer" meant in the Indian context. On November 22, 1917, he noted in his diary, "Somehow or other the work of becoming a B.A., LL.B., which is prevalently undertaken in modern India, seems to destroy the personality very frequently of the man who undertakes it" (*ibid.*, p. 49). On another occasion, when the Congress-League Scheme was formally presented to him, he said that "all the brains of the movement were there. But the difficulty is . . . that owing to the thinness with which we have spread education, they have run generations away from the rest of India (*ibid.*, entry for Nov. 26, 1917, p. 56).

aware of how much fear and distrust these attitudes were producing in the minds of many educated persons in south India: "copious tears are shed on behalf of the ryots and depressed classes, who, it is stated, would be oppressed . . . once the power is transferred to the educated classes . . . These scandalous aspersions and mischievious libels, when persistently made in England by men in position without any regard to truth, are apt to prejudice the public against Indian demands.[58]

It is important to note that Indians did not regard the opinions of Lord Sydenham and the *Morning Post* as trivial. Montagu himself noticed this when he was in India and wrote in his diary that it amused the correspondent of the *Manchester Guardian* to find that Sydenham "was a great man out here" and that the Indians actually "attached importance" to his statements and were really afraid of him.[59] There was, in fact, little open opposition in England to the views of Sydenham and the *Morning Post*. For all the liberal outlook of the *Manchester Guardian*, neither its dispatches from India nor its editorials during the years 1917–1919 were particularly reassuring to Indians. The only English newspaper that tried to stem the tide of reactionary, imperialist opinion as it was articulated by the Indo-British Association was *The Times*. Soon after the foundation of the Indo-British Association, *The Times* gave a welcome to the new voluntary group "so long as it keeps clear of the spirit of race antagonism," but by late April, 1919, it had come to the conclusion that the Indo-British Association was responsible for creating a deep-seated distrust on the part of Indians toward the possibility of fair consideration of the reforms.[60] Mullins's criticism that the Labour Party was far too preoccupied with domestic politics to be interested in Indian affairs can be applied to many of the more liberal forces in England

[58] *Hindu*, Oct. 9, 1918.
[59] *An Indian Diary*, entry for Nov. 29, 1917, p. 66.
[60] *The Times* (London), Nov. 6, 1917, and Apr. 25, 1919.

between 1917 and 1919. Criticism of the Reforms was left on the whole either to retired Indian administrators and missionaries or to those with economic interests in India. This meant that no one really challenged the public statements of well-organized and well-financed groups such as the Indo-British Association with their facts, figures, and instances of Brahmanical cruelty toward the lower classes. One Madras newspaper (the *Wednesday Review*) fully realized this and wrote in late 1918: "Not only from discussions carried on in the British Press but also from private letters we have been receiving from friends in England, it would appear that the notion is almost universal that Brahmans, as a class, favour Home Rule and subscribe without reservation to Mrs. Besant's school of politics."[61] This growth of anti-Brahman feeling was so pronounced in England that when Dr. Nair boarded ship for India early in December, 1918, after a series of meetings with newspaper editors and politicians, including Ramsay Macdonald, he felt assured of success.[62] On arriving in Madras he said, "I am convinced, absolutely convinced, that no Bill for Indian reforms will pass through the two Houses of Parliament which does not concede the principle of communal representation."[63]

Although many M.P.s were unconvinced that the Justice Party represented anyone other than a few rich, well-educated non-Brahmans, the predominant opinion among those in England who were knowledgeable about Indian affairs was favorable to Justice Party aims. They agreed that communal representation was perhaps the only mechanism whereby the great majority of Indians could be protected against a caste group that had a continuing history of social tyranny and violent political agitation.

[61] Nov. 20, 1918 (*Madras NNR, 1918*).

[62] See Gopala Menon, *A Short Sketch of the Life of Dr. T. M. Nair*, p. 32, and T. M. Nair at the second anniversary meeting of the beginning of the *Justice* newspaper, as noted in the *Madras Mail*, Mar. 10, 1919.

[63] Quoted in *A Short Sketch of the Life of Dr. T. M. Nair*, p. 32.

The provisions of the Montagu-Chelmsford *Report*, along with its open invitation for criticism, naturally helped Dr. Nair's propaganda efforts with politicians and journalists, many of whom were dubious of dyarchy, the Indianization of the I.C.S., and the introduction of an elected majority in the Provincial Legislative Councils. Dr. Nair had used his time in England well; he had spoken widely and had written to journals and newspapers, and he had made many introductions and established contact with powerful supporters such as the Indo-British Association. He was perhaps then not unduly optimistic about the introduction of communal representation for Madras presidency non-Brahmans.

Reaction of the Madras Government to the Reforms

Back in Madras, Dr. Nair quickly realized that opinion in favor of communal representation was hardening. Along with the Justice Party, other groups were speaking out in favor of non-Brahman claims: the M.P.A., British commercial interests (through their spokesman, the *Madras Mail*), and a powerful group of Indian Civil Servants on the Executive Council at Fort St. George. To these was added, somewhat later, the Government of India itself.

Not unaware of this support, the Justice Party had to face the difficult decision of whether or not to cooperate with the Southborough Committee, which had been sent out to India to decide the nature of the franchise under the new reforms. Of the two committees that were to make detailed recommendations for the new constitution, the Southborough Committee was the more important for the Justice Party. To cooperate with it would give the Justice Party an opportunity to present its case before a government body and convince it of the necessity of its demands for communal representation. On the other hand, the Justice Party thought it had reason to believe that the Southborough Committee would be hostile to these demands. For one thing, the commit-

tee had ignored its memoranda. More important, two Brahmans, one from the Tamil-speaking area of Madras, V. S. Srinivasa Sastri, and the other from Bengal, Surendranath Bannerjea, had been appointed to the committee. The leadership of the Justice Party was divided over the question of cooperating with the committee, but Dr. Nair's strong stand against it prevailed. He was, he said, unwilling to be "sat in judgment" by his political opponents.[64] There is little doubt that in advocating boycott Dr. Nair knew full well the risks he was taking, but the risk of antagonizing the committee and losing everything was weighed against the more important support he hoped to gain from Governor Pentland and his Executive Council.

Why the Madras Executive Council supported the Justice Party's claims for communal representation seemed to be simple on the face of things. One reason was that communal representation could be seen as a natural extension of the treatment of the Muslims in the Morley–Minto scheme, a system to which both the British administration in Madras and Indian public men had become accustomed. Furthermore, it had the additional virtue of using "indigenous" divisions as a means of representing the will of the presidency, divided as it was into many caste and religious

[64] Great Britain, Parliamentary Papers, Vol. XVI (*Reports from Commissioners, Inspectors, etc.*, Vol. IX), Cmd. 141, 1919, "Report on the Committee appointed by the Secretary of State for India to enquire into questions connected with Franchise and other matters relating to Constitutional Reforms, Chairman: Lord Southborough." Vol. I, Appendix XV, p. 281; (hereafter cited as the Southborough Committee *Report*). Letter from Dr. T. M. Nair, to the Government of Madras, Jan. 9, 1919. See also the evidence of K. V. Reddi Naidu before the Joint Select Committee in Great Britain, Parliamentary Papers, Vol. IV (*Reports of Committees*, Vol. II), House of Commons Paper No. 203, November, 1919, "Joint Select Committee on the Government of India Bill," Vol. II: Evidence. Answer of K. V. Reddi Naidu to Q. 3003, p. 184. Hereafter, references to this Report and evidence will be cited as Joint Select Committee *Report, Evidence*, or *Appendices*. See also P. Kodanda Rao, *The Right Honourable V. S. Srinivasa Sastri: A Political Biography* (Bombay, 1963), pp. 73–75.

groups. However, the reasons why Lord Pentland and his Executive Councillors, Alexander Cardew and Charles Todhunter, along with other high officials in the Madras government pressed for communal representation were more complex.

The increase in political activity in Madras which preceded and followed Montagu's announcement of August, 1917, suddenly confronted the British administration in Madras presidency with the phenomenon of the city-trained politician. Until then, administrators had had relatively little contact with politics, except as they affected the problems of land revenue or the preservation of law and order. Both the Home Rule agitation and the Montagu-Chelmsford *Report* specifically proposed that elected Indian ministers, who would be politicians, should actually share the powers of directing and executing legislation with an I.C.S. bureaucracy. A dispatch from the Government of India to Montagu stated the relationship between the I.C.S. officer and Indian politics in 1919 very succinctly:

> The permanent British official in India has not, as a rule, taken any part in the democratic institutions of his own land, and is frankly sceptical of their suitability to an eastern country. By the nature of his work, he comes into touch with the vast masses of the people, who have no political aspirations, rather than with the more advanced thinkers. He apprehends that the former will suffer from the administrative inexperience of the latter; and he is anxious for safeguards which will protect them, while at the same time securing the standards of thoroughness and impartiality in public business in which he has been trained.[65]

For this reason, the dispatch went on to point out, most members of the Indian Civil Service felt that the *Report*'s proposals on the

[65] Great Britain, Parliamentary Papers, Vol. XXXVII (*Accounts and Papers*, Vol. VI), Cmd. 123, 1919, "Letter from the Government of India, dated 5th March 1919, and enclosures, on the questions raised in the Report on Indian Constitutional Reforms," p. 2.

changed function of the I.C.S. went further than the conditions in India could justify.[66]

Sir Alexander Cardew, a long-time member of the I.C.S., developed an argument based on the particular nature of India's needs, determined by its social and religious systems.[67] He questioned whether the institutions that were part and parcel of Indian life would in fact allow democracy to operate, since fundamental principles of the modern democratic state were "the recognition of the value of the individual and the belief that, as each individual has but one life, full opportunity should be accorded to allow each to attain his maximum development in that life."

[66] In a letter to the *Morning Post* (July 16, 1918), a retired member of the I.C.S. who had worked in Bombay pointed out in even clearer terms the different frames of reference of the District Officer and the man closer to the central government policies toward the "needs of India." He said: "In my time in India, and I suppose it is so still, there were, as far as the Indian Civil Service was concerned, two distinct atmospheres, the atmosphere of the Mofussil [districts] and the atmosphere of the Secretariat. It was generally understood that if a young civilian wished to get on it was for his interest to be able to leave the Mofussil early in his career if he could secure, by favour and interests at headquarters, an appointment in the Secretariat. Most men are influenced by their environment; so naturally these young men, rising step by step, and breathing the Secretariat atmosphere, learned to look at things in a view favoured at headquarters as in the interests of the Government, more or less in their turn influenced by party politics at home in England, rather than in view of the interest and well-being of the natives of India. This was not the atmosphere of the Civil Servants remaining in the Mofussil, in continued contact with the native element surrounding them. Rather they had at heart the interests and the desires of the native community, and found themselves lacking in sympathy with the views of the Government as opposed thereto. It is these latter servants of the Government who are entitled to speak for the native rather than those who spent all their official lives at headquarters in a Presidency town, or at the headquarters of the Government."

[67] Southborough Committee *Report*, Appendix XVI: Letter No. 1146 (Reforms), dated Dec. 31, 1918, from the Acting Chief Secretary to the Government of Madras, to the Government of India (Home Department), with an annexure containing alternative franchise schemes, Enclosure, "Note by the Hon'ble Sir Alexander Cardew, KCSI, I.C.S." pp. 124–127.

Neither of these conditions, he thought, prevailed in India. Both *karma* and caste prevented a person from changing his status in life and established once and for all his place in the social organism. Since a man's status was unalterable, "equality of opportunity" was impossible, and therefore the "root notions of democracy" ran counter to all the assumptions which for centuries had "formed the common stock of popular belief in India."[68] But what made democracy as an operative political system unworkable particularly in south India was the fact, said Cardew, that there the Brahman held an extraordinarily high place in all fields of activity, and his position of religious and social supremacy had been unquestioned for hundreds of years. The Brahman's social and religious position in south India was, however, less important for politics in Madras presidency than the fact that he was also intellectually supreme. This position had been strengthened by the British: "Under our system," Cardew wrote, "of giving an impartial field for all religions and castes, the Brahman has easily distanced all competitors." As a consequence, though the British had sought to give due representation to all caste groups in the government services, Brahmans held by far the largest number of the higher appointments available to Indians.[69] Though Brahmans in Madras presidency numbered less than one and a half million out of a total population of 42 million, the caste "possesses 70 per cent. of all graduates in arts, 74 per cent. of the graduates in law, 71 per cent. of all the graduates in engineering and 74 per cent. of the graduates in teaching."

Cardew therefore did not think that it would be surprising

[68] Cf. the remarks of John Sharrock ("Caste as a Factor in Indian Reform," p. 145): "Caste destroys all power of initiative. The individual is nothing, the caste system is everything. Independence of thought, the sheet anchor of democracy, is a thing abhorrent to the Hindu."

[69] He cited these figures: "Out of 390 higher appointments in the Educational Department, 310 are held by Brahmans; in the Judicial Department, 118 out of 171; in the Revenue Department 394 out of 679."

if Brahmans gained control of politics in south India. And once they were in power they would certainly bear down hard on the caste groups beneath them, especially on the untouchables. Reiterating the arguments made in London by Lord Sydenham and Dr. Nair, Cardew stated that without the grant of some form of protection to the untouchables and the non-Brahman caste Hindus in the political arena, an oligarchy "totally out of sympathy with the subordinate sections of the population" would persecute and maltreate them. "Is it wise to entrust the happiness and progress of the down-trodden and illiterate Pariah and Panchama community, or even the ill-educated and politically backward non-Brahman castes to an assembly in which the majority will probably be largely composed of and controlled by Brahmans?"

British officials in Madras were skeptical not only of the capacity of the Brahman to represent the interests of the majority of Indians but also of his integrity as a politician and his ability to act as an impartial administrator in the business of recruiting government personnel. These doubts were intensified by the administrative changes proposed by the second of the two committees set up to work on the new constitution, the Feetham Committee. These changes were outlined in a Government of India note called "The Public Services Under the Reforms," which was first circulated early in 1919. The committee proposed that in future there would be three divisions among the public services in India: Indian, Provincial, and Subordinate. At the apex of control was to be the I.C.S.; in second place would be the Provincial Civil Servants, who would be recruited locally but would hold responsible positions. Subordinate posts would be purely clerical. The Madras I.C.S. displayed great hostility toward these proposed changes. There seems to be no doubt that it feared that the implementation of the proposals—particularly the recruitment of Provincial Civil Servants locally by elected ministers, that is, politicians—together with the proposed Indianizing of the I.C.S. would threaten its position, especially because these changes,

it thought, would result in Brahmanizing the Provincial Civil Service.

The Government of India note was important both for what it said about the future of the I.C.S. and for what it implied about the recruitment of the Provincial Civil Service. In the years to come under the new reforms the Government of India thought that the elected Indian ministers would want to "take the provincial services of their departments entirely into their own hands, and to regulate their recruitment, pay, pensions, etc." This could not be done until matters of recruitment had been put on a "legal basis by legislation" so as to "secure selection, over the widest possible field, on merits and qualifications, and to reduce the risks of nepotism." To do this, the Government of India recommended the establishment of a Public Services Commission, "a permanent office peculiarly charged with the regulation of service matters" which would be essential in the face of increasing control of the Provincial Civil Service by elected ministers.[70]

Madras I.C.S. men approached the note with grave misgivings and even contempt. The Chief Secretary, Charles Todhunter, said that it contained "more apologies than proposals." The main weakness of the scheme, he thought, was that the ministers would be "politicians, probably men wedded to particular views of which the inefficiency and conceit of the bureaucracy will form a part, with no experience of administration or handling of men, changeable every three years, and, once parties spring into existence, they are likely with every change to visit their party feelings on the men who have been most successful in carrying out the

[70] Great Britain, Parliamentary Papers, Vol. XVI (*Reports from Commissioners, Inspectors, etc.*, Vol. IX), Cmd. 103, 1919, "Report of the Committee Appointed by the Secretary of State for India to Enquire into Questions connected with the division of functions between the central and provincial Governments, and in the Provincial Governments between the Executive Council and Ministers, Chairman: Mr. R. Feetham," Vol. II, Annexure IV: "The Public Services under the Reforms," pp. 81, 83 (hereafter cited as the Feetham *Report*).

policy of their opponents."[71] Not only would the new ministers be unaccustomed to the workings of administration, but they would gradually take over the recruitment of the Provincial Services, a system of patronage which was to be guarded by the introduction of competitive examinations and by the establishment of a Public Services Commission. Todhunter could not think of these proposals as being anything other than absurd and dangerous: "This means that the recruitment of the lower posts, say, the Sub-Inspector grade in the case of a transferred department will be in the hands of the minister. The Inspectors of the future are the Sub-Inspectors of to-day and a service in which the initial recruitment is badly done will rapidly go to the dogs." He thought it would be unwise to hand over this important function to persons with no previous experience in recruitment, who had achieved their position not by any capacity to administer or select personnel but rather "by reason of their skill in persuading an audience." He also contended that the introduction of appointment by competition through the mechanism of a Public Services Commission would do nothing to decrease nepotism: "We have had plenty of experience of that in this Presidency [and] its

[71] MRO, Public, Ordinary Series, G.O. 392, Mar. 7, 1919. P. Rajagopalachariar, a Sri Vaishnava Brahman who was the Indian member of the Executive Council, disagreed. He wrote, "I do not see why it is assumed that the Indian minister is going to be a decidedly worse man than the Indian member of the Executive Council. He will probably be of the same type as the non-officials who have risen to the Executive Councillorships all over India. The late V. Krishnaswami Ayyar and Sir P. Sivaswami Ayyar were both practically non-officials; though the former was a judge just before his appointment, his experience was that of a non-official; Sir P. S. Sivaswami Ayyar was Advocate General before his appointment, and was accustomed to think in the same groove as the non-official members of the Legislative Council. It is not alleged that in the case of either of my two predecessors the services found any difficulty in carrying out the orders of the Government. Why is it assumed that, the moment a man comes in who is called a minister instead of being called Executive Councillor—there is going to be a great deal of unreasonable treatment of the services?"

inevitable result whatever safeguards may be adopted, is to fill the services by men who have the greatest ability in this direction, the Brahmins." In other words, if Brahman politicians were responsible for recruitment to the services or if a system of competitive examinations was instituted, all the values and efficiency of the British administration in India would be compromised.[72]

What affected the morale and position of the I.C.S. in Madras more immediately than the prospect of Brahmanizing the Madras Legislative Council and the Provincial Services was the future of the I.C.S. itself under the proposed reform scheme. The Government of India note had promised that the I.C.S. would remain free from political change, but it realized that the position in the administration which would be most affected by the introduction of dyarchy was that of the District Officer, who would be responsible both to the Transferred and to the Reserved halves of the government. If any friction were to arise over the working of the two halves, the governor of the province was to deal with it. District Officers in the future could only be protected by the guarantee of a "right of retirement on fair terms, a generous right of appeal in clearly defined circumstances, and the steady influence of a vigilant Governor in the direction of harmonious working and good feeling."[73] Despite the reassurances of the Government of India note, I.C.S. officers in Madras feared that the Indianization of the I.C.S. would mean a decline in the quality of European officers and that in the future under dyarchy I.C.S. officers would play only a subsidiary role in the administration. One Madras I.C.S. officer wrote:

[72] Nine years later Arthur Davies, retired principal of the Madras Law College, where almost all Madras politicians received their legal education, wrote, "If Swaraj for India means merely substitution of Indian—largely Brahmins too if they are to be selected by examination—for Britishers in the Civil Service, it is not worth fighting for." Letter to the *Hindu* (weekly ed.), Aug. 16, 1928.

[73] Feetham *Report,* Annexure IV: "The Public Services under the Reforms," p. 80.

> The whole *raison d'être* of the service is to be altered. We have carried on so far with enormously heavy districts in which the Collectors, exercising most of the power of Commissioners in other provinces, have maintained a reasonable standard of efficiency by moving from office tables at headquarters to office tables in Camp and snatching an occasional inspection for their relaxation. They have been supported by the Sub-Collectors doing the same thing on a minor scale, exercising all the powers of the Deputy Commissioners of other provinces. All this is now to cease. The Civilian is to be the guide, philosopher and friend of the Indian administrator to whom he is to hand over; he is to explain and persuade, argue and refute.'[74]

In effect, the change would mean that the I.C.S. man could no longer remain in his administrative ivory tower where issues, though changing from time to time, could be solved pragmatically, with an eye to efficiency and to what the Collector thought best for the inhabitants of a district. Now, he was forced to become, as Montagu pointed out, a politician.[75]

The prospect of having to be a politician, to deal with politicians and the representative institutions of dyarchy, was a most disquieting one for the Madras I.C.S. officer, with little or no experience even in British politics, and no knowledge of political agitation. As one of them remarked, "The life of the executive officer will in future throughout the service be one of trouble and anxiety."[76] To make matters worse, he would no longer be his own master but would have to add the art of persuasion to his

[74] MRO, Public, Ordinary Series, G.O. 392, Mar. 7, 1919.

[75] In his diary (Nov. 30, 1917), Montagu wrote, "I hear the Madras Government has said that Indian civilians who were members of the Anglo-Indian Association, that is to say, the half castes, must leave it because it has now become a political association . . . They [the Madras Government] cannot and will not understand that civil servants in this country are, and must be more and more, politicians." *An Indian Diary*, p. 70.

[76] MRO, Public, Ordinary Series, G.O. 392, Mar. 7, 1919.

other skills. Even with a system of competitive examinations, the introduction of a large elected majority into the Madras Legislative Council, with the power to select ministers who would wield a measure of control over the recruitment of the Provincial Services, seemed certain to end in both the Legislative Councils and the Provincial Services being filled by Brahmans. As politicians they would not have the requisite judgment to administer in the best interests of the presidency. As members of the Legislative Council, they would only continue to dominate the untouchables and the non-Brahman caste Hindus whom the impartiality and social justice of British administration had sought to protect—or so many I.C.S. officers believed.

The Argument for Communal Representation

As a result, a number of I.C.S. men actively assisted the non-Brahmans, and in particular the Justice Party, in their demand for communal representation as the best way of modifying Brahman supremacy. The ways in which officials in the Madras government assisted the Justice Party cause differed according to the persons involved and the situation. According to Kasturi Ranga Iyengar, editor of the *Hindu*, even before the Reforms scheme was published one senior member of the I.C.S. in Madras, H. F. Gillman, told K. Vyasa Rao, a journalist and a Brahman, to stop supporting the Home Rule movement.[77] Dr. Nair declared this to be false,[78] and we shall probably never know the truth; but it is undeniable that a member of the I.C.S., a former Vellala converted to Christianity named Kumaraswami Tampoe, actu-

[77] *Hindu* (weekly ed.), Dec. 28, 1917. Gillman also castigated the *Hindu* editor for having criticized Lord Pentland's speech to the Madras Legislative Council on May 14, 1917, and he accused him of having condoned the murder of the District Magistrate of Tinnevelly, Ashe, in 1911. See the account in V. K. Narasimhan, *Kasturi Ranga Iyengar*, pp. 108–111.

[78] *Englishman*, Dec. 29, 1917. Gillman was later appointed to assist the Feetham Committee, but in November, 1918, when he was in Simla preparing to tour the province, he died of influenza.

ally joined the Justice Party,[79] and another Indian member of the Madras I.C.S., a Beri Chetti named V. Venugopal Chetti, a senior man in the service by 1917, played, as we shall see, a very active role as Collector in increasing the proportion of non-Brahmans who were recruited to government services.[80]

More immediately, the Governor of Madras, Lord Pentland, and his Executive Council, including Sir Alexander Cardew, directly helped the non-Brahman cause by pressing for communal representation as the basis for the entire Reforms scheme. In answer to an inquiry from the Government of India as to the nature of the franchise structure preferred by the Madras government, the Acting Chief Secretary in Madras wrote back that the Governor was convinced that it was quite premature to implement any scheme of franchise for Madras presidency "on accepted theories," even though he recognized that the Government of India had pledged itself to some advance in this direction.[81] If the burden of the Montagu–Chelmsford *Report* was to transform the Provincial Legislative Councils from advisory bodies to ones possessing mandatory powers, the Madras government stated that a council of this nature would not represent the interests of the presidency. Any scheme that employed a system of franchise using territorial electorates would result in most of the seats being

[79] Explaining why he joined the Justice Party, Tampoe recalled, "It [the Justice Party] was not in its origin a strictly Political Party but a Social movement in its aim and scope. For that reason, I, a member of the premier Government service of an All-India nature, was permitted to join it. I was the 13th member enrolled—I remember the number because of its sinister connotation." Written statement given to the author by A. Kumaraswami Tampoe, Nov. 24, 1962.

[80] See the remarks he made at a Collector's Conference in Ootacamund in August, 1917. MRO, Home (Misc.), Ordinary Series, G.O. 1123, Oct. 23, 1917.

[81] Southborough Committee *Report*, Appendix XIV: Letter No. 1146 (Reforms), dated Dec. 31, 1918, from the Acting Chief Secretary to the Government of Madras, to the Government of India (Home Department), with an annexure containing alternative franchise schemes, p. 105.

"captured by Brahmans, as the exclusive spirit of the Brahmans would secure a solid Brahman vote in favour of Brahman candidates."

In answer to the argument that the great majority of voters who would be enfranchised would not be Brahmans but in fact non-Brahman caste Hindus, the Madras government posited that as the right to vote moved further and further down the social hierarchy the more the lower castes were under the control of the Brahmans. They believed that this control would express itself in the election of a large number of Brahman politicians by a largely non-Brahman electorate. To substantiate their claim, they pointed to the results of elections to the Legislative Councils under the Morley–Minto Reforms. In 1909, out of 13 seats that were "open" electorates available to members elected by local bodies (the indirect system by which elections to the Legislative Councils were held), 9 seats went to non-Brahman caste Hindus and only 3 to Brahmans; in 1916, out of 15 seats then open to such representatives of local bodies, 10 went to Brahmans and only 5 to non-Brahman caste Hindus. It was the opinion of the Madras government that these Brahmans had been elected not only by Brahman voters (there were 1,921 in 1916) but by a considerable number of non-Brahman caste Hindu voters (3,495 in 1916).

In addition, there were several subsidiary reasons why the Madras government rejected both the broadening of the franchise and the construction of a franchise system based on territorial rather than communal electorates. First of all, these measures would give the vote to a large number of illiterate voters; second, untouchables, Indian Christians, Anglo-Indians (i.e., Eurasians), and Europeans would find no representation on the councils; third, a sufficiently trained staff to manage the elections involving a large number of illiterates would be unobtainable. A widening of the franchise would simply not represent the interests of the "great mass of the people of this Presidency."[82] To meet the fears

[82] *Ibid.*, p. 106.

of the non-Brahman caste Hindus and to ensure proper representation of all interests in the presidency, the Madras government recommended a franchise system which would "provide communal electorates freely" wherever possible, and under which nomination would be resorted to only when communal electorates could not be used. But since the Madras government had been requested by the Government of India to provide a scheme based on territorial constituencies, it did so, but it also drew up its own franchise structure based on communal electorates in which non-Brahman caste Hindus would have reserved for them 30 out of a total of 76 seats open for election.

By the time the Southborough Franchise Committee and the Feetham Function Committee finally arrived in Madras, Dr. Nair and other Justice leaders had decided not to appear before the Southborough inquiry,[83] and the Madras Executive Council and Governor Pentland had hardened in their opposition to either a broadening of the franchise or the creation of territorial electorates. Southborough pleaded for an increase in the electorate from Lord Pentland's proposal of 0.8 of one percent of the population to the one percent or even two percent of the population which other provinces had considered feasible, but the Madras government was unwilling to give in at all.[84] The Feetham Committee, concerned with the division of subjects between reserved and transferred departments, fared no better. M. E. Couchman, who represented the Madras government on the Feetham Committee, would not recommend the transfer of "any subject in Madras unless separate provision [in the Legislative Council] is made for

[83] Nevertheless two Justice Party members were co-opted to work on the committee to provide it with local information. They were N. Subarayulu Reddiar, from South Arcot district, and L. Swamikannu Pillai, a Roman Catholic. *Madras Mail*, Nov. 11, 1918.

[84] Southborough Committee *Report*, Appendix XIV: Note of a discussion with the Governor of Madras in Council, held at Madras on Jan. 22, 1919, pp. 127, 128.

the non-Brahmins,"[85] and he was unwilling to transfer even fisheries to Indian control because the "higher castes, who take the leading part in political life in that Presidency, do not themselves eat fish and have so far displayed little interest in the subject of Fisheries."[86]

The unwillingness of the Madras government to cooperate with either the Southborough Committee or the Feetham Committee, and its concomitant insistence both upon communal representation and upon a very limited broadening of the franchise can be considered in part as a means by which a bureaucratic government was protecting its interests against pressures from Britain and to some extent from the Government of India to make the government of the presidency more of a popular institution. That the Madras government's refusal to compromise was also basically connected with its fear of a Brahman take-over was well pointed out by Lord Southborough when he appeared before the Joint Select Committee in London in 1919:

> I am not sure that we could not have made an arrangement with the Madras Government as to the number of electors and the franchise if there had not been overlying difficulties surrounding us, the principle of which, as the Joint Committee know was the quarrel as to communal representation for the purpose of putting a check to the preponderance of power alleged to be in the Brahmin community . . . I could not point to any assent on the part of the Government of Madras, but I think the dissent of the Government of Madras, when we concluded our labours with them, remained on the communal questions, and not with regard to the electorate.[87]

There is little doubt that the Madras consultations were unpleasant for Southborough and his committee members, and he had

[85] Great Britain, Parliamentary Papers, Vol. XVI (*Reports from Commissioners, Inspectors, etc.*, Vol. IX), Cmd. 176, 1919, "Views of the Government of India upon the Reports of Lord Southborough's Committees," p. 10.

[86] Feetham Committee *Report*, p. 43.

[87] Joint Select Committee *Evidence*, Answer to Q. 752, p. 42.

little compunction about pointing it out to the Joint Select Committee. The non-Brahman demands for communal electorates were, Southborough said, "as a detailed question, as distinct from all-overriding difficulty . . . the most awkward thing we had to deal with. It was really a question peculiar to Madras."[88]

Both the Feetham and the Southborough committees entirely disregarded the protests of the Madras government. Couchman's pleas that excise and fisheries should remain reserved departments were overruled by the Feetham Committee, and the Southborough Committee went about constructing a franchise system for Madras which applied communal representation only to Muslims, Europeans, Anglo-Indians, and Indian Christians, and used territorial constituencies for the remaining electorates which represented about 1.3 percent of the total population.[89] The Southborough inquiry considered not only a system whereby the number of Brahmans elected to the Legislative Councils could be limited,[90] but also a system giving reserved seats for non-Brahmans in plural member constituencies. The latter system provided that if there were two seats in one territorial constituency (a district or Madras city) and one of these seats was reserved for a non-Brahman, the non-Brahman who polled the highest number of votes would win the reserved seat; the other seat could be held by anyone, Brahman or non-Brahman—whoever polled the second largest number of votes. This proposal for reserving a certain number of seats for non-Brahmans in constituencies where either Brahmans or non-Brahmans could vote appealed to the South-

[88] *Ibid.*, Answer to Q. 758, p. 42.

[89] Southborough Committee *Report*, Appendix I, Madras, pp. 23–26.

[90] The Government of India felt that it could discount the Southborough Committee's rejection of this method of handling the non-Brahman problem in South India because "it would force the Brahmans into a separate electorate against their will." Great Britain, Parliamentary Papers, Vol. XVI (*Reports from Commissioners, Inspectors, etc.*, Vol. IX), Cmd. 176, 1919, "Views of the Government of India upon the Reports of Lord Southborough's Committees," p. 11.

borough Committee, and it recommended that this line of inquiry be taken up in future negotiations.[91]

Apart from these rather hesitant attempts to solve the impasse created by the Madras situation, the Southborough Committee was frankly unwilling to go along with the views of the Madras government, or of the Justice Party, especially since Dr. Nair, P. Tyagaraja Chetti, and K. V. Reddi Naidu had refused to appear before the committee and had therefore deprived it of "all power of intervention and made a settlement by consent impossible."[92] The committee was baffled by the uncompromising attitude of the Justice Party (the M.P.A. did appear before it) and offered a word or two of advice. "We cannot but think," the Southborough *Report* stated (p. 9), "that, if the capacity already devoted to politics among the non-Brahmans were utilized in organising this great majority, the non-Brahmans would make itself [*sic*] effectually felt despite the power and influence of the Brahmans."

In all this, it was fear of the Brahmans usurping political power in an electoral structure without communal electorates that determined the attitude of the Madras government. Both the Southborough and the Feetham committees found the Madras government quite as impossible an institution as had Montagu a year before, unwilling to change its conception of its role and demanding that problems in Madras were unique and required special handling. In the same way as the Madras government had resented the release of Mrs. Besant as the instigator of political agitation supported by south Indian Brahmans, so also it found the demands of the Secretary of State that it widen the franchise and expose the non-Brahmans to Brahman politicking gratuitous and unnecessary. Dr. Nair's unwillingness to cooperate with the Southborough Committee sprang partly from the Justice leadership's awareness of the feelings of the Governor and his Council toward the Justice Party's demands, and suggests an amazing

[91] Southborough Committee *Report*, p. 10.

[92] *Ibid.*, p. 9.

confidence in the belief that its boycott of a governmental body would not harm its chances of ultimate victory.

Reaction of the Government of India to the Reforms

The Government of India considered that if the Reforms scheme were not to start under a great disadvantage in Madras, the bitter feelings that had been aroused by the non-Brahman question in Madras must be placated.

> We cannot expect co-operation and good will from the non-Brahmans so long as no provision is made to secure their interests. We do not regard it as sufficient to say, as in effect Lord Southborough's Committee have said, "since you will not assist us to find a solution, we can do nothing for you." Our own responsibility for the contentment of the country makes it incumbent upon us to arrive at a settlement which will satisfy the reasonable claims of both parties before reforms are introduced.[93]

Ignorance of local conditions, the Government of India felt, had prevented the Southborough Committee from seeing the necessity of granting non-Brahmans special treatment even though they outnumbered Brahman electors by about four to one. The committee's argument that the non-Brahmans should organize for politics instead of pleading for special treatment found even less sympathy from the Government of India—particularly the idea that if they did so they could outdistance the Brahmans in provincial politics. "We are less optimistic," the Government declared. Recent experience in Madras and the fact that "numbers count for little in India as against social, educational and especially religious superiority," prompted the Government to try and secure for the Madras non-Brahmans a "fair share" in the legislature on the grounds that otherwise it would be open to the charge

[93] Great Britain, Parliamentary Papers. Vol. XVI (*Reports from Commissioners, Inspectors, etc.*, Vol. IX), Cmd. 176, 1919, "Views of the Government of India upon the Reports of Lord Southborough's Committees," p. 10.

that it was acquiescing "in the establishment of an oligarchy in Madras."[94] Like the members of the Executive Council of Madras, the Government of India came down heavily on the side of the non-Brahmans, and for some of the same reasons. As administrators responsible for the peace and tranquillity of the country and for the working of the forthcoming reforms, they felt that the fears of the Madras non-Brahmans should be mollified. Moreover, the image of the Brahmans of south India as an exclusive, sacerdotal, and unrepresentative group of politicians unfit to understand or to govern adequately in the interest of the vast uneducated millions prevented the Government of India from appreciating the Southborough recommendations and what seemed to them the unwarranted advice offered to the non-Brahmans by the Southborough Committee.

The Justice Party and Congress in 1919

Aside from the unwillingness of the Montagu–Chelmsford *Report* to grant communal representation to south Indian non-Brahmans, the Justice Party found little in the proposals to criticize.[95] Be-

[94] *Ibid.*, p. 11.

[95] *Madras Mail*, Sept. 4, 1919. Koka Appa Rao Naidu, a lawyer from Behrampore, Ganjam district, writing in *Justice*, criticized the Montagu-Chelmsford *Report* in these terms: "What earthly use is the citizen spirit and of national representation, when the non-Brahman communities feel that they are not at all represented in the councils of the state. They will be mere empty phrases when they give scope for the formation of a close Brahman Oligarchy. Thus it is clear that the absence of communal electorates would lead to the effective perpetuation of the class divisions which the authors desire to prevent." See Koka Appa Rao Naidu, *Communal Representation and Indian Constitutional Reforms* (Cocanada, 1918), p. 19; this pamphlet, published in December, 1918, is a reprint of articles that originally appeared in *Justice*. The Madras Chamber of Commerce also petitioned the Madras government against establishing a "high caste oligarchy." See MRO, Public (Reforms), Ordinary Series, G.O. 1050–1051, Nov. 19, 1918: Letter from the Madras Chamber of Commerce to the Chief Secretary, Government of Madras, Nov. 15, 1918.

cause of its overriding interest in communal representation, it was against the interests of the Justice Party to oppose the government, as did many other persons and groups following the publication of the *Report*. Pursuing its own provincial demands, the Justice Party in this and other ways cut itself off more and more from Congress and all-India affairs. It had been opposed to the nationalist proclivities of the Home Rule movement in 1916. Passive resistance—which had been condemned by *New India* early in 1915 (Jan. 4) and again briefly discussed and cautiously approved by the Madras Congress in 1917 at the time of Mrs. Besant's internment by the Madras government[96] was anathema to Justice Party members.

Congress in Madras, on the other hand, though it tolerated within its ranks a non-Brahman wing interested in communal representation for south India non-Brahmans, reacted to the Reforms proposals with much more hostility and caution than did the Justice Party. C. Vijayaraghavachari, a Brahman, who was an influential member of the more moderate wing of the Madras Congress organization, believed that certain aspects of the Reforms could be salvaged—for example, the Indianization of the I.C.S., the reform of the Government of India in England, and the advance in the extension of local self-government.[97] However, a much more condemnatory manifesto signed also by Vijayaraghavachari and by Kasturi Ranga Iyengar, C. Rajagopalachariar, and George Joseph (a supporter of Tilak) affirmed that the scheme was based on "an unqualified distrust of the people of

[96] At the meetings of the Madras Provincial Congress on August 13 and 14 an animated discussion preceded the passing of a mild resolution which advised the adoption of "Passive Resistance insofar as it involves opposition to all unjust and unconstitutional agitation and also against the prohibiting of public meetings peacefully and constitutionally conducted to protest against the unjust and unconstitutional orders of and against the repressive policy of Government." *New India*, Aug. 15, 1917.

[97] *Hindu*, Aug. 5, 1918.

India and is so radically wrong alike in principles and in detail that in our opinion it is impossible to modify and improve it."[98] By far the greatest animus of the manifesto was directed against the plan to split the provincial executive into the two halves of reserved and transferred functions and against associating the princes with the Government of British India.

Reactions to the *Report* by politicians outside the Madras political environment were mixed. Tilak dismissed them as impossible. Gandhi thought they deserved "sympathetic handling" but urged that the essentials of the Congress–League Scheme be incorporated into the *Report*'s proposals.[99] More guarded in their approval of the proposals were the Moderates, but once committed to the scheme they confined themselves to recommendations for minor changes. The events of the two years following the appearance of the Montagu–Chelmsford *Report* were to reverse the positions of Gandhi and Tilak; the first finally rejected the proposals in favor of noncooperation, while the latter modified his position to one of "responsive cooperation."

The most important factor that isolated the Justice Party from Congress and all-India politics—a factor that was to change the complexion of Congress politics in the year following the publication of the *Report*[100]—was its curious reaction to the publication

[98] Narasimhan, *Kasturi Ranga Iyengar*, pp. 134–135, and *Madras Mail*, July 15, 1918.

[99] Report dispatched from Bombay, July 19, 1918, in *The Times* (London), Aug. 2, 1918. Gandhi also said, "If you could but crowd the battlefields of France with an indomitable army of Home Rulers fighting for the Allied cause, it would also be a fight for our own cause. We would then have made out an unanswerable case for granting Home Rule, not in any distant time or in the near future, but immediately."

[100] For an analysis of the ways in which Gandhi developed his program of noncooperation and gathered support for it between the time the Montagu–Chelmsford *Report* was issued and the organization of the Khilafat Committee and the final passing of the noncooperation resolution at the September, 1920, Special Congress session, see the paper by Hugh Owen, "The Adoption of Non-co-operation, 1920," unpublished paper delivered to

of the Rowlatt Committee *Report* on July 19, 1918,[101] eleven days after the release of the Montagu–Chelmsford proposals.

The Rowlatt *Report* recommended the reenactment of legislation passed under the Defence of India Act, a wartime measure, so as to give the Government of India summary powers to control, detain, and try without jury persons whom the Rowlatt *Report* described as revolutionaries likely to menace the security of India. Though the *Report* urged that this legislation should be used only in unusual circumstances when peace and order were jeopardized, its issuance within a fortnight of the release of the Montagu–Chelmsford *Report* caused a "new sensation."[102] It looked as though the situation after the implementation of the Morley–Minto scheme, when politicians were merely allowed to advise, and repressive legislation was passed against newspapers and seditious meetings, was about to be repeated and that in order to stifle political activity the Government of India was arming itself with legislation that to most Indian politicians, including the Liberals in Madras,[103] was insulting and the very antithesis of what they had hoped for under the new reforms.[104] It seemed that with one hand the British government was offering a measure of

the Seminar on South Asian History and Politics, Australian National University, on Dec. 5, 1963.

[101] Circumstances held up the publication of the Rowlatt *Report* in England until October 23, 1918: "it was arranged that copies should be despatched to England as soon as possible. It was discovered early in October that the copies understood to be in transit had through an oversight not yet been despatched from India. The Report has been accordingly reprinted in this country." Great Britain, Parliamentary Papers, Vol. VIII (*Reports from Commissioners, Inspectors, etc.* Vol. IV), Cd. 9190, October 1918, "Report of Committee Appointed to Investigate Revolutionary Conspiracies in India," p. 2.

[102] *The Times* (London), Aug. 1, 1918.

[103] *Madras Mail*, Mar. 18, 1919.

[104] Ironically, the Montagu–Chelmsford *Report* and the Rowlatt Committee *Report* are bound side by side in the same volume of Parliamentary Papers.

freedom, and with the other determinedly crushing any attempt to use that freedom.[105]

Enactment of the legislation recommended by the Rowlatt Committee caused grave consternation among Congress members all over India,[106] and prompted Gandhi, who was soon to revolutionize Congress politics, to apply first his idea of a *hartal* in India[107] and then to use noncooperation itself. Popular response both to Gandhi's call for a nonviolent *hartal* and police and military precautions taken to control the situation were most evident in the Punjab. It was there that on the late afternoon of Sunday, April 13, 1919, General Dyer, commanding a body of some one hundred troops, fired 1,650 rounds of ammunition on an unarmed crowd at Jallianwallah Bagh in Amritsar, leaving 370 Indians dead. A recent description of this tragedy states that "The walls of the Jalianwala Bagh still bear the marks of the bullets ordered to be fired, quite unjustifiably, by General Dyer, the strong man who gave India into the keeping of a half-naked saint, the first step in the birth of a new nation."[108]

The Rowlatt *Report* and the massacre at Amritsar, though they helped Gandhi galvanize mass support for his noncooperation movement and gave him an opportunity to take over Congress politics, left the Justice Party strangely untouched and unmoved. In fact, the government action in the Punjab and the government legislation that had provoked the popular agitation were approved by both Dr. Nair and Tyagaraja Chetti, the two most important

[105] Many of the ideas expressed in this paragraph were suggested by H. C. E. Zacharias, *Renascent India* (London, 1933), pp. 178–199.

[106] *Madras Mail*, Jan. 31, 1919.

[107] Gandhi actually got the idea for a *hartal* as a means of protest in India while visiting Kasturi Ranga Iyengar and C. Rajagopalachariar in Madras, shortly after the Rowlatt Act was published. "The idea came to me last night in a dream," Gandhi said, "that we should call upon the country to observe a general *hartal*. Satyagraha is a process of self-purification, and ours is a sacred fight." Mohandas K. Gandhi, *My Experiments with Truth*, trans. Mahadev Desai (Boston, 1957), p. 459.

[108] Rupert Furneaux, *Massacre at Amritsar* (London, 1963), p. 179.

Justice leaders. When the Rowlatt *Report* was published, Tyagaraja Chetti said: "To what community belong most of the persons who find a bad eminence in that Report? Who is the central figure among them? He is none other than the Brahmin gentleman [Tilak] who has been elected to the Presidential chair of the next session of the Indian National Congress."[109] In January, 1919, when the Rowlatt legislation was under consideration by the Government of India, Dr. Nair even questioned why Montagu and Chelmsford had seen fit to issue their *Report* in the face of the findings of the Rowlatt Committee.[110]

This condonement on the part of the Justice Party of the British action at Jallianwallah Bagh reveals more clearly than any other instance the degree to which it was cut off from all-India opinion and events. Its preoccupation with the matter of acquiring a protected position in the new Legislative Councils proposed by the Montagu–Chelmsford *Report* weakened its capacity to oppose the government in the interests of Indians and India generally. In its opposition to the Brahman position it was assisted by members of the I.C.S. in Madras, who feared a Brahman usurpation of both political and administrative power in Madras presidency, and by the Government of India, which felt the need to assuage non-Brahman fears in order to give the Reforms some chance of success. Most interesting, and perhaps most important for the Justice Party's work in England, was the opinion created by Smith, Sydenham, and Sharrock, for they, aided by Mrs. Besant's reputation for Brahman bias, were able to provide a receptive climate of opinion whereby Justice views, and particularly those of Dr. Nair, would find considerable acceptance. Work by the Indo-British Association along with the activities of Dr. Nair and the lack of support for Montagu were important ingredients in the ability of the Justice Party to mobilize opinion for its cause in England and to prepare its case for presentation before the Joint Select Committee in London in the summer of 1919.

[109] *Madras Mail*, Oct. 21, 1918. [110] *Ibid.*, Jan. 14, 1919.

Chapter 5

THE JOINT SELECT COMMITTEE HEARINGS, 1919-1920

The Government of India Bill which was to implement the Montagu–Chelmsford reform scheme was given its second reading in June, 1919, and then went into its committee stage. For some Indians this stage was critical, since the final details of the constitutional framework would be decided by the Joint Select Committee. Representatives of the Home Rule League, the Muslim League, the Congress, the M.P.A., the Moderates, the Landholders' Associations, and, of course, the Justice Party went to London to present their cases before the Committee and to press their own interests. Of the two groups that were primarily concerned with securing communal representation for the non-Brahmans in Madras, the Justice Party—as before—carried the main burden. The M.P.A. had little money for its deputation in London, and it lacked the British contacts that had been cultivated for the Justice Party deputation by Dr. Nair. In any case, the M.P.A. took second place to its parent body, the Indian National Congress, in the presentation of its case.

That the necessity for some form of communal representation for the non-Brahmans in Madras was eventually conceded, against the recommendations of the Secretary of State for India and the Viceroy, cannot, however, be attributed to the ability and the efforts of the Justice Party alone. In fact, it is clear from documentary evidence how bewildered and naïve the Justice deputation, apart from Dr. Nair, was upon its arrival in England. The

Justice Party deputation's final success was due primarily to those forces we analyzed in the previous chapter, that is, the British press, the Indo-British Association, and official support from the Government of Madras. Also, during the summer and autumn of 1919 with the approaching implementation of a measure of responsible government for India, strong racist feelings against Indians and "Asiatics" began to appear in England; the hostility against Brahmans in particular was helpful to the Justice Party and the non-Brahman cause. In the years 1919–1920, we can see the ways in which the Justice Party presented its case before the Joint Select Committee, the manner in which it was aided by outside support, and the outcome of the whole struggle for communal representation.

The Justice Party Deputation in London

Before leaving for London for the second time in twelve months to prepare the way for the Justice Party deputation to the Joint Select Committee hearings, Dr. Nair said in Madras that if political power were given to the Brahmans, anarchy or Bolshevism would be the result. But, he said, "I hope that when I come back I shall be able to bring you far more cheerful tidings than you have now."[1] Dr. Nair's health was increasingly deteriorating, and his return to London was also prompted by his need for expert medical care. Dr. Nair knew that he was seriously ill with diabetes, and when he left Central Station in Madras for England he said to the Rajah of Pudukotah, a good friend of his whom he hoped would be on the Justice Party deputation, "Well, I hope I shall be alive till then."[2]

The Rajah of Pudukotah was not, however, chosen as a member of the Justice deputation. Its four members were K. V. Reddi Naidu, a Kapu (Telugu) lawyer who had long been connected with the municipal politics of Ellore; A. Ramaswami Mudaliar,

[1] *Madras Mail*, Apr. 28, 1919.
[2] Recounted by the Rajah of Pudukotah, *ibid.*, July 25, 1919.

a Vellala from near Vellore, a Tamil area, later to become an important figure in Justice Party politics; Koka Appa Rao Naidu, also a Telugu, from predominantly Oriya-speaking Behrampore in Ganjam district; and L. K. Tulsiram, a member of the Saurashtra weaving caste group of Madura in the heart of the Tamil-speaking area, a group that considered itself to be Brahman but was not so recognized by the Tamil Brahmans. Another member of the Justice Party, P. Ramarayaningar, a Telugu Velama (later the Rajah of Panagal), went to London as a representative of the All-India Landholders' Association and Madras Zamindars and Landholders' Association. He was not formally a member of the Justice deputation, but as we shall see, events in London in the summer of 1919 involved him very deeply in Justice Party affairs and the presentation of its demands. All four members of the deputation were granted what were known as "priority certificates" for ship passage by the Madras government.[3] Reddi Naidu and Ramaswami Mudaliar sailed from Bombay on June 21, 1921, and arrived in London on July 9. Tulsiram and Koka Appa Rao Naidu arrived in London a month later.

What makes the Justice Party's struggle for communal representation in London so interesting is the fact that it was fully described by Reddi Naidu in the diary that he kept for the period between the middle of June and the end of October, 1919. The diary is remarkable for its great detail; Reddi Naidu kept it religiously and wrote down everything, including transcripts of conversations and descriptions of his reactions to people and to London. The diary therefore gives one a very full picture not only of his part in the negotiations but of the personal tensions within the delegation itself, and it provides great insight into Justice Party tactics.

Reddi Naidu and Ramaswami Mudaliar (both of whom later played important roles in Madras politics) learned of Dr. Nair's

[3] MRO, Public, Ordinary Series, G.O. No. 150, Mar. 27, 1919.

illness, seemingly for the first time, on the day after their arrival in London when they visited him in a nursing home. In his diary Reddi Naidu wrote, "It distressed me to see him like that [but] he was pleased we came." "'I feel relieved,'" Nair said.[4] Dr. Nair told Reddi Naidu and Ramaswami Mudaliar that he thought Montagu had packed the Commons half of the Joint Select Committee but that the "opposition"—that is, Congress—was not propagandizing except at a few clubs. The next day Dr. Nair established contact between Reddi Naidu and Charles Watney, a journalist who was to account for a large measure of the Justice Party's success in its demand for special treatment. That Watney was a decisive influence is clearly shown by the Reddi Naidu diary. Reddi Naidu and other members of the deputation either saw Watney or called him practically every day and he was consulted on every new development; in fact Watney acted, as he himself described it to Reddi Naidu, as secretary of the Justice deputation in London. Watney had considerable journalistic experience; he was connected with the *World* and also with a news agency,[5] and through their connections with him the Justice deputation and the non-Brahman cause had the great advantage of the support of a man who was familiar with many in Parliament. Moreover, Watney was an extremely clever strategist, and he not only directed the deputation's efforts to the influencing of public opinion through the press, but he also contrived to manipulate the procedure of the Joint Select Committee in their favor. This practical help was invaluable to the deputation, which, as Reddi Naidu's diary reveals, felt disoriented in a foreign city and bewildered by the workings of the British political system. With Watney's help they were able to assume in the Committee hearings an importance and stature that their position in Indian politics generally did not warrant.

[4] K. V. Reddi Naidu Diary, entry for July 10, 1919.
[5] *Ibid.*, entry for July 11, 1919.

Before either Reddi Naidu or Ramaswami Mudaliar could start work on their statements for the Joint Committee they had to withstand a heavy blow to their cause. It was announced on July 16 that the Joint Select Committee, realizing that Dr. Nair was very ill, would under the circumstances go to him in the nursing home on Friday, July 18, to take his evidence.[6] But the next day Dr. Nair died. Reddi Naidu relates in his diary how he heard of the events on July 17 and his immediate reactions.

> After breakfast we took out A. R.[amaswami Mudaliar]'s books, took the tube for Gt. Portland Road and reached Dr. Nair's place at about 10 A.M. . . . When we reached Dr. Nair's place, the nurse who opened the door asked us to sit in another room. We sat down. The matron came in and said, "Dr. Nair died this morning suddenly at 5 A.M." It was a blow to us — a stunning blow — our hope, our guide, our philosopher, our lead — dead! — What is to become of us — what is to become of the N[on] B[rahman] cause — what will be the future of the movement— Good God. Has it come to this. . . . We are unfortunate that the one man on whom the fate of 27 million depended passed away — a martyr to the cause — he died a victim — a noble death — 3 years of strenuous, tireless, ceaseless work has killed him. All the goals of the N[on] B[rahmans] still unattained. . . . The sight of freedom is yet far away — yet to be denied to us — not yet within reach . . . We shall yet try — try and win, win a victory, though not as glorious as that which he would have won. . . . Now is the time for courage.[7]

Dr. Nair died of pneumonia and diabetes, through the study of which he had attained considerable fame as a doctor. His death, though it had been expected by his doctors in London, came sooner than was anticipated and it took both Reddi Naidu and Ramaswami Mudaliar by surprise. Notices of his death were

[6] This news surprised Reddi Naidu. "Why the infernal hurry — why should he be examined first? Could it be that Dr. Nair wanted to be done with and go away to India for his health." *Ibid.*, entry for July 16, 1919.

[7] *Ibid.*, entry for July 17, 1919.

widely printed in the London press,[8] and he was cremated at Golders Green.[9]

Before Dr. Nair died he had given Reddi Naidu and Ramaswami Mudaliar two letters of introduction: one to Colonel Yate, who was active in Indian affairs in the House of Commons, and one to Lord Sydenham, a close personal friend. Unlike Colonel Yate, whom Reddi Naidu found "anxious to do good to India—to give Reforms,"[10] Sydenham was "against all reforms practically speaking." Reddi Naidu found this particularly upsetting because, as he aptly put it, the Justice Party could not afford to "oppose reforms if C[ommunal] R[epresentation] is granted."[11] Reddi Naidu also met an old friend of the Justice Party, Sir Alexander Cardew, who was to retire from the I.C.S. in September, 1919; he urged the deputation to reply to questions by the Joint Committee "without any fear."[12] In order to continue the liaison between the Justice Party and the European Association, headed by T. Earle Welby, who had lately resigned as editor of the *Madras Mail*, Watney arranged a meeting at which Reddi Naidu, P. Ramarayaningar, and Welby spoke.[13] A full account

[8] A very full obituary, containing many details lacking even in obituaries in Madras, was printed in *The Times* (London), July 19, 1919.

[9] Reddi Naidu Diary, entry for July 21, 1919. Reddi Naidu said that "our present tribute to him would be to achieve what he had at his heart." One of the few mourners at the crematorium besides Reddi Naidu was K. P. S. Menon, later an important member of the I.C.S., who in 1919 was studying at Oxford. See K. P. S. Menon, *Many Worlds: An Autobiography*, p. 44.

[10] Reddi Naidu Diary, entry for July 12, 1919.

[11] *Ibid.*, entry for July 28, 1919.

[12] *Ibid.*, entry for July 24, 1919.

[13] *The Times* (London), June 21, 1919, announced Welby's arrival in London, commenting on his conviction that the proposed India Bill would mean "the very reverse of self-government" for 90 percent of the Indian population. The meeting for Welby and "Indian delegates from Madras" was announced in Watney's own paper, the *World* (July 26), as one that would show the real democratic movement as represented by these delegates, and not by the spurious imitation foisted on the public by Montagu.

of the meeting was printed in both *The Times* and the *Morning Post*, but the unfamiliarity of the Indian names must have been the reason for the confusion in reporting, for as Reddi Naidu wrote in his diary "P. R[amarayaningar] is put down for me and what Welby said was attributed to P. R. or me." [14]

Reaction in England to the India Bill

Criticism of the India Bill became intensified as soon as it passed under parliamentary review. And as the prospect of responsible government for India drew nearer, criticism became sullied by racial prejudice and deep-seated fears of imperial collapse. The missionary and "old India hand" criticism, represented by such persons as the Rev. John Sharrock and Lord Ampthill, a former governor of Madras, was still motivated by fears that once the Reforms were implemented the Brahmans would be secure in power.[15] Inevitably, these alarmists predicted, the Brahmans would "deny to the masses the only means whereby, with caste in the ascendant, they can ever hope to hold their own." And they pointed out that Brahman agitation preyed on English ignorance of Indian conditions and if successful would jeopardize British trade with India and the position of the Indian Civil Service itself.[16] A further reason for alarm was the fact that the House of

[14] Reddi Naidu Dairy, entry for July 29, 1919. The fullest account appeared in the *Morning Post* on July 29. See also *The Times* (London) for the same day.

[15] See, e.g., the letter of Rev. John Sharrock in the *Daily Telegraph*, Sept. 12, 1919, and the letter of Rev. E. F. Brown, Superior of the Oxford Mission to Calcutta, writing from India, in the *Church Times*, Oct. 17, 1919. Also see the long letter of Lord Ampthill, governor of Madras from 1899 to 1906, which asserted that the British government in India would be unable to control the Brahman oligarchy because it would be a "domination which will be all the worse for the fact that the Brahmins have become so 'politically-minded' as to forsake the gods of their fathers and run after strange gods, of whom they have heard from 'prophets' like Mrs. Besant." *Morning Post*, Nov. 27, 1919.

[16] Article by "Faujdar" in *National Opinion*, November, 1919. See also the *Spectator*, Sept. 20 and Dec. 6, 1919.

Lords, in which sat a number of former governors of Indian provinces along with many others who had Indian experience, had recently had its powers severely limited. It was frustrating for those in the Lords, experienced as they were in the Indian question, to have to sit by while an unusually inexperienced House of Commons (with the largest number of new M.P.s of any interwar Parliament)[17] held the power for deciding the future of British policy in India. Recognizing the unusualness of the situation, the House of Commons did in the event rely more heavily than it would normally have done upon the Lords, whose opinions were on the whole reactionary and racist. The incidental fact that Montagu was a Jew was particularly exploited, the gist of the criticism being that he was destroying an empire he had not helped to build. All these attitudes were given cohesion by a certain "evangelistic" zeal, of the sort expressed by the historian of India, Vincent Smith: "India has done much for me, and now, before my working days come to an end, I should like to do something for India, by contributing my mite towards the solution of the dangerous problem."[18] In other words, it was one's duty to save India from Brahman machination.

Montagu had, of course, quite realized the "imperialist" problem when he visited India in late 1917. He knew that the main reason why conservatives opposed his appointment was their fear that his policy would lead to self-government, which would in

[17] Charles Mowat, *Britain Between the Wars* (Chicago, 1955), p. 8. Montagu wrote that he mourned "greatly the disappearance of my old political friends from the House of Commons. They had much ability, which can ill be spared, and a modus vivendi with them would have immeasurably strengthened the Government. Charles Robert's [a member of Montagu's mission to India] disappearance is deplorable from the Indian point of view." Montagu to Chelmsford, Jan. 10, 1919, quoted in S. D. Waley, *Edwin Montagu*, p. 192. The decay of the Liberal Party and the effects of that decay in the Coupon election are well analyzed in Trevor Wilson, *The Downfall of the Liberal Party, 1914–1935* (London, 1966), pp. 135–183.

[18] Vincent A. Smith, *Indian Constitutional Reform Viewed in the Light of History*, p. 4.

turn mean customs autonomy for India.[19] After he had studied the problem at first hand, he was convinced that the essential cause of the misunderstandings between the British bureaucracy and the Indians was the existence of "British ascendancy and subject race feeling"; the lack of communication between the two peoples led to Indian political agitation, and compromise became impossible.[20] In particular, he noticed the racist feeling generated both in Madras and in Calcutta through the efforts of Welby and the European Association. When Montagu asked Welby at the Joint Select Committee hearings a year and a half later whether Europeans in India had taken part in any political activity during the last few years. Welby replied that they had had "none till recent years, except for the great agitation at the time of the Ilbert Bill."[21] Welby denied Sir John Rees's charge that he had originated the racist feeling among Europeans in India; on the contrary, Welby said that he had "simply expressed opinions which existed," though he admitted, when pressed, that under his direction the membership of the European Association had grown immensely.[22]

Of the other source of racist feeling, the Indo-British Association, Montagu commented that it had "libelled whole sections of

[19] Edwin S. Montagu, *An Indian Diary*, ed. Venetia Montagu, entry for Nov. 14, 1917, p. 31.

[20] *Ibid.*, entry for Dec. 1, 1917, p. 75. See also Montagu's talk with J. L. Maffey, private secretary to Lord Chelmsford, Viceroy of India, *ibid.*, entry for Nov. 30, 1917, pp. 70–71.

[21] Great Britain, Parliamentary Papers, Vol. IV (*Reports of Committees*, Vol. II) House of Commons Paper No. 203, November, 1919, "Joint Select Committee on the Government of India Bill," Vol. II: Evidence. A. to Q. 4773, p. 270. Hereafter, references to this Report, Evidence, and Appendices will be cited as Joint Select Committee *Report, Evidence*, or *Appendices*.

[22] *Ibid.*, Answer to Qs. 4649 and 4651, p. 267. Reddi Naidu, seemingly blind to Welby's role, said about the evidence Welby gave, "Welby was good to us and gave evidence helping us." Reddi Naidu Diary, entry for Aug. 18, 1919.

the Indian population."[23] He had the insight to understand what lay behind the imperialist opposition of this group, composed as it was of retired civil servants and missionaries. Quoting Lord Morley, his distinguished predecessor in the office of Secretary of State for India, he said in the House of Commons, "It cannot be easy for any man to waken up to new times afer a generation of good honest labour in old times."[24] But he deplored the effects of racism. While he was in India he wrote in his diary, "Perhaps there is some truth in the allegation that I am an Oriental. Certainly that social relationship which English people seem to find so difficult comes quite easy to me; and we shall go from bad to worse until we are hounded out of India, unless something is done to correct this sort of thing"[25]—that is, racist superiority.

As the hearings on the India Bill continued, conservative opinion lived up to Montagu's worst fears, and the attacks were sometimes rudely personal. Lord Ampthill wrote to the *Morning Post* in the autumn of 1919 (Nov. 27):

> There is one point in the Bill to which attention should be called, as it throws some light on "the spirit of the declared policy of His Majesty's Government." It is the clause which enacts that ex-criminals are not to be disqualified from the election to the Councils for more than five years. The question arises whether this indulgence to ex-criminals is the result of Bolshevist or Jewish idealism. It is certainly not in accord with the spirit of British traditions.

The racist opposition also brought up Montagu's family connection with the firm of Samuel Montagu, silver merchants to the Government of India, using it as a way of questioning his personal integrity. "Mr. Montagu," wrote the *Spectator* on December 6, 1919, "is a very clever, very self-willed, though by no means inexperienced politician of Asiatic race and Jewish faith. If he

[23] Great Britain, 5 *Parliamentary Debates* (Commons), CXVI (1919), 627.
[24] *Ibid.*, Col. 2402.
[25] *An Indian Diary*, entry for Nov. 11, 1917, p. 17.

were possessed of that delicacy, and high and fastidious sense of personal honour, which are among the best traditions of English political life, he would undoubtedly have refused to occupy the position he now holds." Another charge was that Montagu had capitulated to a sacerdotal caste. The *Morning Post* (Nov. 20, 1919), referring to the Joint Select Committee hearing, said that "at the back of the room a clique of dusky politicians clustered round their high priestess, Mrs. Annie Besant, and followed with audible chuckles the skillful conduct of their case by . . . Mr. Montagu."

Montagu did not entirely lack support for his stand against communal representation. The Indian Moderates were behind him, as well as some members of the House of Commons. One M.P., during the debate on the second reading of the India Bill on June 5, 1919, described the Brahmans as a group who "had done more than any others in India to raise the depressed classes."[26] Surendranath Banerjea, a Brahman, did his best to justify trust in his caste. He wrote in the *Manchester Guardian* (June 25, 1919): "In Bengal, at any rate, a number of non-Brahmanical castes enjoy a high social position. Lord Sinha, Sir Krishna Gupta, and Mr. Bhupendranath Basu . . . who are Kayasthas, are regarded by the people of Bengal as the equals of Brahmans in every respect. Brahmans and other castes combine freely for public purposes, and elect one another."[27] Another Indian, by far the most capable Indian journalist in England at the time, St. Nihal Singh, wrote a well-reasoned article refuting the arguments of Vincent Smith and asserting that social legislation had not been passed mainly because of the opposition of a bureaucratic government. Indians were therefore forced to demand constitutional reform. "How," he asked, "can Indians reform society when the most powerful instrument for such re-

[26] Great Britain, 5 *Parliamentary Debates* (Commons), CXVI (1919), 2333.

[27] See also the *Observer*, June 22, 1919.

form, namely action through legislation, is denied to them, and when every ounce of energy and intelligence that they possess must be put into the constitutional movement for the acquisition of that instrument."[28]

The most eloquent praise for Montagu's refusal to deny freedom and social unity in India came from Colonel Wedgewood in his comments in the House of Commons on the Montagu-Chelmsford *Report*:

> It would have been so easy for the old stereotyped official to have produced a Report calculated to persuade all save the ignorant reader that the British Government, in the true interest of minorities in India, and not at all considering the advantages of British control, felt it to be essential to provide separate representation for all the different castes and communities of that country. I suspected that would be done, that we should have class representation in order that the British Government, playing the Machiavellian game, might play off one caste and one religion against the other, one interest against the other. The genuineness and the honesty of this Report is shown by the very fact that the whole arguments of the Report are directed against separate representations, and that the Report is based on the genuine desire to see India become a nation where all classes would pull together. . . . I am glad I have lived to see the day when a fellow countryman of mine in an official position, not only puts these views forward but has been able to get them received unanimously by the House of Commons as the right thing to do. I regret . . . that he is a Jew and not an Englishman. In doing the right thing by the world the Englishman has been left behind, and the Jew has come first.[29]

Colonel Wedgewood's point was reinforced in the same debate by Sir Edward Parrot in his description of Lord Sydenham and other opponents of the Reforms as people "who all along have

[28] St. Nihal Singh, "Caste and the New Indian Constitution," *London Quarterly Review*, July, 1919, p. 108.

[29] Great Britain, 5 *Parliamentary Debates* (Commons). CIX (1918), 1210.

shown themselves opposed at all times and in all countries and in all circumstances to self-government in any form."[30] In Montagu's eyes the Indo-British Association had made only one constructive criticism of the Reforms and that was their proposition that "'In every Province place one or two districts in charge of a wholly Indian official staff and extend that, if it proves satisfactory, into a division and finally into a whole Province.'" But even this was a ludicrous and entirely obsolescent proposal. "In other words," Montagu argued, "the Sydenhams of the future can remain on their throne, untrammelled by control from above and undismayed by criticism from below. How is that to lead to the progressive realization of responsible government?"[31]

The Justice Party and the Joint Select Committee

The Joint Select Committee first met to take evidence on July 16, 1919. The members of the Committee were the Duke of Northumberland, the Marquess of Crewe, Viscount Middleton, Lord Islington, Lord Sydenham, and Lord Sinha[32] from the Lords;

[30] *Ibid.*, col. 1219. Sir Edward Parrott's experience in India dated back to the year 1911, when the Morley–Minto Reforms were in operation. He came to be called Padgett, M.P. and Globetrotter, in derision by Indians who were indignant at being analyzed by an Englishman who had made a "cold weather" visit to their country. Editorials such as the following, which appeared in the *Morning Post* on July 17, 1918, must have been in his mind when he commented on the *Report*. "At present we govern India; the proposal is that Indians should govern our officials. The idea of Asiatics controlling Englishmen may be native to the mind of Mr. Montagu: it is repugnant to British instincts. There is in fact no compromise possible: no white man of good type would accept such a situation."

[31] Great Britain, 5 *Parliamentary Debates* (Commons), CXVI (1919), 2313.

[32] In his autobiography (*My Working Life*, p. 369 n.), Sydenham, who hated Brahmans, also expressed his dislike for Kayasthas. Speaking of raising Sinha to the peerage, Sydenham said, "Very few peers understood that a clever Bengali Lawyer of Kayasth caste was the last person who could speak for the Indian peoples, and all his utterances, therefore, most naturally acquired disproportionate weight. On several occasions, he gravely misled the House."

and Mr. Bennett, Sir Henry Craik, Major Ormsby-Gore, Sir John Rees, Mr. Ben Spoor, and, of course, Montagu from the House of Commons. Lord Selborne was the chairman. Both Dr. Nair and Watney thought that Montagu had packed the Commons side of the Committee.[33] To combat Montagu's influence, Watney arranged for Reddi Naidu and P. Ramarayaningar to supply Lord Sydenham with questions that would intimidate witnesses hostile to communal representation.[34] He also elicited from conversations with Ormsby-Gore (who opposed special treatment for Madras non-Brahmans) certain information as to how the Joint Select Committee approached its witnesses and what questions they would ask, and he passed this information on to the Justice Party deputation.[35]

Perhaps more to the point, Watney gave detailed instructions to the Justice deputation about the supplementary memoranda they should present to the Joint Committee, and he introduced them to a press where they could get their memoranda promptly and efficiently printed. A shorthand-typist (a Tamil Christian name Gnanavolu Alfred) was hired,[36] and Reddi Naidu, the main witness in the deputation now that Dr. Nair was dead, started work on his memorandum. After some ten days of almost constant work, he finished the memorandum, and five days later, August 11, the complete printed copy, forty-five pages long, was in the hands of the Joint Committee.[37]

Reddi Naidu appeared before the Committee on August 12 and he was examined for a longer time than any other Indian witness;[38] his evidence was exceeded in length only by that of

[33] Reddi Naidu Diary, entries for July 10 and 12, 1919.
[34] *Ibid.*, entries for July 22 and Aug. 23, 1919.
[35] *Ibid.*, entry for July 17, 1919.
[36] *Ibid.*, entry for July 11, 1919.
[37] *Ibid.*, entries for Aug. 4, 5, 11, 1919.
[38] Reddi Naidu's evidence before the Joint Select Committee covers 18 pages. His memorandum is also the longest and most complete statement

Sir Michael O'Dwyer. The intensity with which Reddi Naidu was examined can be accounted for partly by the recent death of Dr. Nair, for whom Reddi Naidu had to speak, but more especially by the great agitation that had been carried on both in England and in India by the Justice Party and its supporters. The Committee very clearly seems to have realized that it must have a full inquiry. Before answering questions put by the Committee members, Reddi Naidu told them that the death of Dr. Nair had deprived the movement of its most able leader but that the validity of the Justice Party's claims still remained; he also informed them that non-Brahmans had joined the armed forces in large numbers, that "Besantine agitation" was bogus, and that Brahmans, because of their attitude toward pollution, were unwilling to undertake some of the normal duties of local government councillors, such as visiting outcaste areas.[39]

In presenting the Justice case, both in his answers to questions and in his memorandum, Reddi Naidu began with the assumption that India could not be considered a nation.[40] Especially in south India there was, he testified, a basic racial difference that separated Brahman from non-Brahman; the former were Aryans, the latter Dravidians.[41] The Aryan Brahmans, by virtue of their great religious and social power, had cowed not only the outcastes but the non-Brahman caste Hindus as well. This religious power, now augmented by their dominant position in the public life of south India, would be transmuted into political power under the proposed reforms unless something was done to protect the interests of the non-Brahmans. Under the Reforms, Reddi Naidu said, "The Brahmins will become ministers with

of position by any Indian group; it covers 15 pages in the Joint Select Committee, *Appendices*.

[39] Joint Select Committee, *Evidence*, Answer to Q. 2818, pp. 176–178.

[40] Joint Select Committee, *Appendices*, p. 58.

[41] Joint Select Committee, *Evidence*, Answers to Qs. 2910, p. 182, and 3280, 3283, p. 192. Joint Select Committee, *Appendices*, p. 51.

great *powers*. The councils will have vast powers in the Reform scheme. Apart from the control of the administration of transferred subjects, the Brahmin minister and his Brahmin Legislative Councillors will have the great power of raising taxation."[42] The only way of counteracting the effects of this unfair power structure would be to give non-Brahman caste Hindus a system of communal electorates.[43] The communal electorates were not an end in themselves but a way of granting, "by a special device, an adequate share to those who cannot by ordinary means receive their due share of representation."[44] Communal representation was the only way in which an equality between Brahman and non-Brahman could be achieved, thereby promoting the cooperation between castes and races that Montagu sought to ensure by his scheme.[45] The Justice Party would accept any system of reform, short of Home Rule, provided it granted communal representation to non-Brahmans, for only by communal representation could the interests of the country be preserved.[46] To cap his plea on behalf of non-Brahmans for protection from Brahman oppression, Reddi Naidu said, "May we not in our turn repeat the argument that if good government by the British is no substitute for self-government by Indians, any good government by the Brahmins is no substitute for self-government by non-Brahmins."[47] All Reddi Naidu's arguments had one aim: to prove that conditions in Madras were special and different from those elsewhere in India, that the Brahmans in Madras were a particularly bad lot,[48] and that, as Ramaswami Mudaliar put it in his memoran-

[42] Joint Select Committee, *Appendices*, p. 61.

[43] In answer to Q. 3025, p. 185, in the Joint Select Committee, *Evidence*, Reddi Naidu said that the Justice demands included under the term non-Brahman all those who were neither Brahmans nor untouchables.

[44] Joint Select Committee, *Appendices*, p. 59.

[45] Joint Select Committee, *Evidence*, Answer to Q. 3239, p. 191.

[46] *Ibid.*, Answers to Qs. 2818, p. 176, and 2879, p. 182.

[47] Joint Select Committee, *Appendices*, p. 63.

[48] Joint Select Committee, *Evidence*, Answer to Q. 3124, p. 188.

dum to the Committee, Madras presidency should be "treated as the 'political Ulster of India.'"[49]

There is little doubt that Reddi Naidu's evidence was received with sympathy and interest, even by those, including Ormsby-Gore, who opposed special treatment for the Madras non-Brahmans. During his questioning "there were sneers once or twice from [the] Home Rule audience, and Selborne [the Chairman] was angry and called for order."[50] Two members of the Committee, Rees and Sydenham, were sympathetic to the Justice cause, and on this occasion, as at other times, indulged in the practice, as the Chairman said, of stating "their own opinions, and ask[ing] if that is the fact."[51] Lord Sydenham, for example, put this query to Reddi Naidu: "The non-Brahmins of Southern India do not threaten this Committee and the Parliament of this country?" Reddi Naidu's reply was, "A non-Brahmin cannot afford to threaten."[52] On another occasion Lord Sydenham asked Sir Alexander Cardew, "In your opinion the scheme does not so much mark a gradual movement towards responsible government as a somewhat revolutionary change?" To which Sir Alexander replied, "I am afraid that the answer must be, yes, to that: I think it is a revolution."[53] Cardew was himself sympathetic to the non-

[49] Joint Select Committee, *Appendices*, p. 93. A. Rangaswami Iyengar, editor of the Tamil newspaper *Swadeshimitran*, had suggested that because of the special configuration of castes and apprehensions of the non-Brahmans a unique scheme "specially for our own Presidency" should be constructed. *Hindu* (weekly ed.), Nov. 29, 1918.

[50] Reddi Naidu Diary, entry for Aug. 12, 1919. A good account of Reddi Naidu's evidence appeared in *The Times* (London), Aug. 13, 1919. Lord Sydenham was immensely pleased with Reddi Naidu's handling of the questions and told him that he had created a "*remarkable impression*" and that he had made up for what had been expected of Dr. Nair. Reddi Naidu Diary, entry for Aug. 15, 1919.

[51] Joint Select Committee, *Evidence*, interjection after Q. 4717.

[52] *Ibid.*, Q. 2685, and Answer, p. 180.

[53] *Ibid.*, Q. 6015, and Answer, p. 335. For Rees's handling of the situation in the same way, see his Qs. 825 and 835 of Lord Southborough, *ibid.*, p. 47.

Brahmans, and it was of some significance in the final decision that both he and Sir Murray Hammick, the two government witnesses best qualified to speak on Madras affairs, were convinced that non-Brahman caste Hindus needed communal representation in order to survive politically.

Two members of the Justice delegation, L. K. Tulsiram and Koka Appa Rao Naidu, did not reach London until after the Committee had heard Reddi Naidu, and the Secretary of the Committee, pleading lack of time, at first refused to examine them or Ramaswami Mudaliar, the fourth member.[54] Watney, however, sent a strong letter of protest to the Committee—and a copy to the press—charging that although the Committee had already heard four south Indian Brahmans, who represented but a mere 3 percent of the population of Madras presidency, it was unwilling to hear the evidence of a similar number of south Indian non-Brahmans, who had traveled to England at great expense and trouble.[55] The Committee was obliged to relent, and it heard the three on August 25.[56]

Montagu, hoping to secure a compromise settlement, pressed

[54] Reddi Naidu Diary, entries for Aug. 12 and 16, 1919. Reddi Naidu talked briefly with Montagu after the hearing about the matter of examining the other members of the deputation.

[55] *Ibid.*, entry for Aug. 17, 1919. A full account of the episode is to be found in the *Madras Mail*, Sept. 22, 1919.

[56] In response to cables from the Justice deputation in England, P. Tyagaraja Chetti and C. Natesa Mudaliar, respectively heading the Justice Party and the Madras Dravidian Association, sent cables of protest to several conservative newspapers in England. Natesa Mudaliar's cable went as follows: "Southern India non-Brahmins resent Parliamentary Committee refusal further non-Brahmin evidence. Reform without communal representation will end in Brahmin oligarchy and tyranny, leading to trouble and turmoil, strife and faction. Mr. Montagu's attitude highly partial. Pray remember our war services." (*Morning Post*, Aug. 28, 1919.) Both cables were printed in the *Spectator* for August 30, and *The Times* on August 29 carried the cable from Natesa Mudaliar. The Committee had, of course, already heard the three Justice witnesses before these cabled protests were printed in England.

the Justice deputation to come to some decision as to how many seats in the new Madras Legislative Council they would demand if the Committee were to grant communal representation to Madras non-Brahmans. On August 14 he met with Justice representatives and offered them six seats in a special or communal electorate for non-Brahmans. This was unacceptable to Reddi Naidu, Tulsiram, and Ramarayaningar. Montagu offered a second alternative, a grant of thirty seats to non-Brahman caste Hindus in what were called reserved seats in plural constituencies — a system whereby in any two-seat constituency, where one seat was reserved for a non-Brahman, the non-Brahman with the greatest number of votes would get the reserved seat, and the other seat would go to whatever candidate, Brahman or non-Brahman, got the greatest (or second greatest) number of votes. The important difference between communal as against reserved seats was that in communal electorates only non-Brahmans could vote for non-Brahmans, whereas under the reserved seat system all electors could vote for any candidate, Brahman or non-Brahman — a condition to which Reddi Naidu objected particularly. But Montagu attempted to bring him round:

> You made a *characteristically courageous* statement when you said that you would accept any reforms if communal representation is granted. I was immensely impressed. Can you not take a similar view about this conference. Have a short round table talk. Agree to some figure [of reserved seats]. I will then tell the Comm[ittee]. Here are people who could settle their great differences and to say they can't rule themselves is absurd. If this question is satisfactorily settled I can die a happier man.[57]

Montagu suggested that the non-Brahmans should consult with the Brahmans, M. Ramachandra Rao and S. Srinivasa Sastri, and try to reach a compromise that would be acceptable to both the Brahmans and the non-Brahmans. On the day after their talk

[57] Reddi Naidu Diary, entry for Aug. 14, 1919.

with Montagu, Reddi Naidu, Ramarayaningar, and Tulsiram decided to demand forty-five seats in reserved seats or thirty seats in communal electorates, but Reddi Naidu thought the matter was treated much too casually by his colleagues, particularly Ramarayaningar. "No one in our party," he wrote, "seems to have given serious thought to this. God help us in this matter."[58]

Actually, the growing distrust between the two Justice leaders, Reddi Naidu and Ramarayaningar, was one reason for the failure of the round-table meeting proposed by Montagu; the other was the refusal, according to Reddi Naidu, of Srinivasa Sastri to co-operate.[59] When Montagu learned that the Brahmans and the Justice Party had failed to reach a compromise, he suggested that the whole question be referred to the Madras government for settlement. This was precisely what the Justice Party did not want, and Reddi Naidu immediately cabled Tyagaraja Chetti to call protest meetings in Madras and to send cables to Montagu to this effect.[60] Justice leaders could well be alarmed, for the members of the Madras Executive Council who had been friendly to their cause had either retired or died. Lord Pentland had been replaced as governor by Lord Willingdon, who was known to be close to Montagu and opposed to the non-Brahman case, and the present Indian member of the Executive Council was P. Rajagopalachariar, a Brahman. In addition, the Justice Party realized that in London its cause was strengthened by the ignorance of many of the Joint Committee members and by the interest of a press that was on the whole sympathetic. In other words, it would be far easier to obtain communal representation (or at least a generous number of reserved seats) in London than it would be in Madras.[61]

[58] *Ibid.*, entry for Aug. 15, 1919.
[59] *Ibid.*, entries for Aug. 18 and 17, 1919.
[60] *Ibid.*, entries for Aug. 28 and 29, 1919.
[61] One member of the Joint Select Committee, Mr. Bennett, puzzled by the demands that the question not be settled in Madras, said to Sir Sankaran

The English press had generally allowed more space to the contributions of pro-Justice Englishmen and Dr. Nair than to the supporters of Montagu. After Dr. Nair died, Reddi Naidu, Ramaswami Mudaliar, and Koka Appa Rao Naidu made full use of the space given to them in newspapers, and they spent as much time talking to editors as the editors were willing to allow them. They were particularly busy in late August, September, and October, while the Joint Select Committee was taking evidence. One editor, after publishing the views of Koka Appa Rao Naidu, commented that "the idea of democracy is alien to two-thirds of the Indian people, and even the Bengali Babu and the Madras Brahman, when they advocate Home Rule, mean that their rule should be substituted for that of Great Britain."[62] These efforts had the effect of publicizing the non-Brahman ideology and of popularizing still further the notion that the Brahman could not be trusted with the welfare of the Indian Empire.[63]

The Justice Party representatives also began a speaking tour of the major provincial cities,[64] and made contacts with members of both the Liberal and Labour parties. Dr. Nair had tried to put his case before the Liberals the previous year, but, as Reddi Naidu suggests in his dairy, the Liberals gave him the cold shoulder and

Nair, "Can you explain why I, and I suppose other members of the Committee, have had what must almost be called shoals of resolutions from various non-Brahmin and low-caste bodies in Southern India protesting specifically against the reference of this question to the Madras Government?" Joint Select Committee, *Evidence*, Q. 9676, p. 558.

[62] *Western Daily Press*, Sept. 20, 1919.

[63] See Koka Appa Rao Naidu's letter in the *Morning Post*, Sept. 5, 1919; K. V. Reddi Naidu's letter in *ibid.*, Sept. 23, 1919; editorial in *ibid.*, Oct. 9, 1919; Koka Appa Rao Naidu's letter in the *Western Daily Press*, Sept. 19, 1919; A. Ramaswami Mudaliar's letter in the *Staffordshire Sentinel*, Sept. 24, 1919, and another by him criticizing Mrs. Besant in the *Western Mail*, Oct. 11, 1919; and the editorial in the *Sunday Times*, Oct. 19, 1919, entitled "Home Rule for India—The Brahmin Danger."

[64] Shortly before his death Dr. Nair had said there was no point in giving lectures. Reddi Naidu Diary, entry for July 11, 1919.

he became very angry.[65] In 1919, however, the Liberal politicians whom Reddi Naidu met were all willing to concede the necessity for communal representation. Both Ramaswami Mudaliar and Reddi Naidu spoke at the North Lambeth Liberal Club and received a good response.[66] From the Labour Party, support was more tentative. At a meeting of the Justice deputation and Labour Party executives on August 13, the Labourites "seemed impressed with our arguments," Reddi Naidu wrote, "[and] asked questions about Mrs. Besant. They finally asked us to await until the [Joint Select Committee] report is published. Then at the time of the [India] Bill coming before the House, to prepare an amendment and send it to them, so that they may consider it and see that justice is done to us, if necessary."[67] The Justice Party was especially eager to win both the politicians and the British public to its point of view before the Congress, so far rather quiet, could start its campaign.[68] Using tactics that had worked effectively in Madras, it held meetings on the same nights and in the same towns as those held by Congress. In Bristol, for example, on October 20, the non-Brahmans, according to the local paper, got the larger audience. The effects of Justice propaganda were clearly shown at the rival Congress meeting where the chairman, in introducing the speakers, N. C. Kelkar, B. G. Horniman, and A. Rangaswami Iyengar, a Tamil Brahman, posed the question of who would be "in practice, the ruling class when the promised reforms were made good? The present movement might result in an increase of the Brahmin influence."[69] Ramaswami Mudaliar and Reddi Naidu gave some thirty to forty speeches each in provincial cities and in London, and Koka Appa Rao Naidu and Tulsiram were

[65] *Ibid.*, entry for Sept. 17, 1919.

[66] *Ibid.*, entry for Sept. 22, 1919.

[67] *Ibid.*, entry for Aug. 13, 1919. For a press report of Reddi Naidu's speech, see the *Daily Herald*, Aug. 14, 1919.

[68] Reddi Naidu Diary, entry for Sept. 16, 1919.

[69] *Western Daily Press*, Oct. 21, 1919.

also very active. Congress, despite the activity of some of its representatives (notably S. Satyamurti),[70] was not so well financed as the Justice Party and could not afford to send representatives on long speaking tours. The Congress organization in England appears to have been somewhat casual; at least Kasturi Ranga Iyengar found the British committee of the Congress "very inactive" when he visited England in late 1918.[71]

The Joint Select Committee *Report* was issued on November 17, 1919. It contained this recommendation: that the non-Brahmans of Madras presidency "must be provided with separate representation by means of reservation of seats. The Brahmins and non-Brahmins should be invited to settle the matter among themselves; and it would only be, if agreement cannot be reached in that way, that the decision should be referred to an arbitrator appointed for the purpose by the Government of India."[72] The Justice deputation felt it had essentially won its case and departed for India. When the deputation arrived at Central Station in Madras, Tyagaraja Chetti said that they had won special representation for non-Brahmans "with the help of their British friends."[73] A month later, at the Confederation of the Justice Party on December 30, a resolution was passed acknowledging the "valuable services rendered to the cause of the non-Brahmins by Charles Watney by assisting their delegates in many ways."[74] The truth of these assertions cannot be overemphasized, but Tyagaraja Chetti should also have given due recognition to the work of K. V. Reddi Naidu. He unofficially assumed the leadership of the

[70] S. Satyamurti, whose great energy and eloquence were to characterize his later political activity in Madras, was secretary to the Congress deputation in England and gave over fifty speeches to public meetings there. MS p. 5 of a chapter entitled "Off to England," part of a projected biography of Satyamurti being written by P. Sundarajan, to whom I am indebted for a copy of the manuscript.

[71] V. K. Narasimhan, *Kasturi Ranga Iyengar*, pp. 152–153.

[72] Joint Select Committee, *Report*, p. 76.

[73] *Madras Mail*, Dec. 1, 1919.

[74] *Ibid.*, Dec. 30, 1919.

deputation on the death of Dr. Nair and took on the difficult task not only of convincing others but of maintaining unity within the deputation. He realized, unlike the others, that immense effort was needed to present the Justice case, and his sustained hard work contrasted with the casualness of his colleagues. Unfortunately for the Justice Party, their rejoicing was premature. The final round of negotiations and agreement and compromise was still to come, during which the number of reserved seats would be settled through a series of conferences between the Brahmans and non-Brahmans.

Arbitration and Outcome

Ironically, even before the *Report* of the Joint Select Committee was published, an incident occurred which at the time seemed to imperil the entire crusade of the Justice Party. On August 21, during the Joint Committee hearings, after Cardew had stated the definite necessity for the provision of communal electorates for non-Brahmans in Madras, Montagu asked him if he would be surprised to learn that the non-Brahmans had gained more seats in the recent elections to the Legislative Council than the Brahmans. Cardew, who had spent much of his time asserting that the non-Brahmans needed protection from the superiority of Brahmans in law, education, government service, and politics, replied, "Really! I should be surprised. Is that so?"[75] The truth of Montagu's assertion was unassailable, for the elections to the Madras Legislative Council in July, 1919, had in fact resulted in the return of only four Brahmans and eleven non-Brahmans—the reverse of the results of the 1916 elections when ten Brahmans had found a place on the Council. Reuter's dispatch to India of Cardew's answer produced in the *Hindu*, a paper which had consistently opposed communal

[75] Joint Select Committee, *Evidence*, Q. 6088, and Answer, p. 338. These elections were the last to be held in Madras under the Morley–Minto scheme and were, of course, only valid until the new Reform scheme came into operation within a year's time.

representation, a response that castigated both the bureaucracy and the non-Brahmans for their obstinacy. "To prate of Brahmin oligarchy," wrote the *Hindu* (Aug. 26, 1919), "and Brahmin oppression in such circumstances is absurd." Lionel Davidson, a member of the Madras Executive Council, and a man fully committed to the idea that the Justice Party's claims were valid, regarded Montagu's question as a challenge to the integrity of the Madras government and to its sincerity in its representation of the conditions in the presidency. Determined to prove that Cardew's and Todhunter's contentions were in fact correct, Davidson wrote a long minute for circulation among the Executive Councillors. With characteristic thoroughness, he went into the exact conditions of each electoral contest in the 1919 elections to prove that the non-Brahmans represented in the Justice Party, without communal representation under the Reform scheme, would not have the slightest chance of getting their due share of representation.[76] His analysis proved that the only genuine illustration of a non-Brahman candidate winning a seat over a Brahman opponent in a straight fight was in a constituency that included Tinnevelly district, where T. N. Sivagnanam Pillai, a Vellala (later a minister in the Justice government of 1923–1926), defeated K. Rama Ayyangar, a Brahman. In this instance, Davidson pointed out, the

> result was attributable to the influential position of the Vellala community in the Tinnevelly district in which nearly 36% of the voters were resident. It is notorious that in that district the position of the Vellala is such as to enable him to compete on level terms with a Brahman. Mr. Rama Ayyangar himself was a bore of the first water and personal considerations may have reduced

[76] "For my own satisfaction I have made an examination of the recent elections in order to see how far the results bear out the implied suggestion that the non-Brahman has proved his ability to withstand Brahman influences." MRO, Local and Municipal (Legislative), Miscellaneous Series, G.O. 122, Oct. 17, 1919. Note by Lionel Davidson, dated Sept. 18, 1919.

> the extent of the support accorded him. In the Tinnevelly district there is undoubted antagonism between Brahmans and Vellalas.[77]

Otherwise, non-Brahmans, like Kesava Pillai, the president of the Madras Presidency Association, were defeated by concerted Brahman action;[78] the non-Brahmans who were returned won either because of a split in the Brahman vote or because there was no Brahman opponent. Davidson insisted that with the broadening of the franchise, a larger number of uneducated non-Brahmans would be given the vote and would therefore be more susceptible to Brahman influence; the lower the socioeconomic level of the voter, the greater the possibility of pressure being exerted by the Brahman. Finally, the short tenure of the present Council meant that the prospects for election were rendered less attractive and the contests less keen and this, in turn, meant that fewer Brahmans contested the elections.[79]

In the elections to the Corporation of Madras itself in January, 1920, there seemed further justification for rejecting any kind of special treatment for non-Brahmans. In those elections, out of 30 seats available, 3 were unopposed. Of those successful, 19 were non-Brahmans, 7 were Brahmans, 2 were Muslims, and 2 were Christians.[80] Nevertheless, the Joint Committee's decision in favor of reserved seats forced the Governor, Lord Willingdon, to act, and he arranged a conference between a group of non-Brahmans

[77] *Ibid.*

[78] Kesava Pillai relied on Brahman support but lost badly to a Brahman, B. Shiva Rao. Davidson said that Kesava Pillai "had since made bitter complaints of the deceitful treatment accorded to him by Brahmans who had promised him support . . . and also of the manner in which Brahman officials worked against him." *Ibid.*

[79] He also felt that a split in the Brahman vote would be less likely under the Reforms scheme, although this supposition seems hardly tenable. *Ibid.*

[80] *Madras Mail*, Jan. 30, 1920. According to the *Mail*, of the 30 elected, 11 were vakils, 6 merchants, 3 landlords, 5 doctors, 2 journalists, and 3 retired government officials.

and Brahmans for January 13, to decide how many reserved seats should be granted to non-Brahmans.

No agreement was reached at this meeting, but the Justice Party, employing a technique they had learned in their recent campaign in England, sent a cable to the *Daily Telegraph* in which the phrase "the Brahmins refused to move an inch" figured strikingly.[81] Of the second, and decisive, conference held on January 31, a great deal is known because, despite the demand of the Brahman members, particularly C. P. Ramaswami Iyer, that the proceedings be kept secret, a complete transcript was published by P. Tyagaraja Chetti in both *Justice* and the *Hindu*.[82]

At this session, presided over by Lord Willingdon, Kesava Pillai said that the M.P.A. would be willing to accept 36 seats out of a total of 63 seats available in general or non-special constituencies; Kasturi Ranga Iyengar, editor of the *Hindu*, agreed to that figure, but Ramachandra Rao, a highly intelligent and articulate Andhra Brahman and an archenemy of K. V. Reddi Naidu, suggested that the number of non-Brahman reserved seats in plural member constituencies should be only 28 or 29 — that is, that every district be given two general constituency seats, one of which would be reserved for a non-Brahman, and of the four or five seats that would represent the city of Madras (a decision still pending) two should perhaps be reserved for non-Brahmans. Between the 36 to which Kasturi Ranga Iyengar agreed and the 28 seats to which Ramachandra Rao agreed, Lord Willingdon, who admitted his distaste for reserved seats altogether, suggested that Tyagaraja Chetti agree to a number like 50 percent of 63 seats available, or 31 seats. Tyagaraja Chetti was unwilling to accept this, and pressed for 40 seats instead, but this was unacceptable to any of

[81] *Hindu* (weekly ed.), Feb. 19, 1920.

[82] The non-Brahmans of both the Justice Party and the M.P.A. insisted that the proceedings should be made public because, as they put it, "they were accountable to others." *Hindu*, Feb. 9, 1920.

the Brahmans present and the conference broke down. Before leaving the meeting, Willingdon expressed his dismay at the inability of the group to come to an agreement; their actions cast a slur upon the presidency. As a last resort, he said, a mediator would be appointed by the Government of India to settle the differences.[83]

The failure to reach an agreement at his meeting was a turning point in the relations between the *Madras Mail* and the non-Brahmans, between the Brahmans and the non-Brahmans, and also between the M.P.A. and the Justice Party. After the transcript of the proceedings was published, letters that appeared in the *Hindu* and the *Mail* indicated how feelings within these groups were hardening. V. Chakkarai Chetti, an Indian Christian who had represented the M.P.A. in London, writing to the *Hindu* (weekly ed., Feb. 19), claimed that the M.P.A. had been under the impression that the Brahmans in the Madras Congress organization supported their demand for special treatment in the electorates of Madras presidency but he was disgusted by the way in which both the Justice Party and the M.P.A. representatives had been treated, especially at the second conference; in particular he cited the growing Brahman intransigence over the question of granting a larger number of seats to non-Brahmans. P. Kesava Pillai, the president of the M.P.A. and the first to suggest that the M.P.A. and the Justice Party should combine forces, wrote a long statement in the *Mail* (Feb. 13) detailing the experience of the non-Brahman representatives at the second conference. Speaking for both the M.P.A. and the Justice Party, he declared, "We wanted reforms, and we have faith in the capacity and intelli-

[83] As can well be imagined, a good many acrimonious feelings were expressed at the meeting. Both C. P. Ramaswami Iyer and M. Ramachandra Rao insisted that the arguments for special treatment must be kept on the level of a means of compensating a "backward" community for the greater educational and political ability of the Brahman instead of straying into the area of population disparities or the actual number of prospective electors.

gence of our people living in the towns and the villages, to manage their own affairs if properly guided; we want to stimulate and encourage the non-Brahmins as any other body to aspire, to compete, to lead, and to work in the public service and for public good."

But the Justice Party was losing friends as well as gaining them. The *Madras Mail*, which had heretofore wholeheartedly supported the non-Brahman, particularly the Justice Party's, claims for special treatment, now began referring to such claims as groveling and unrealistic, especially in view of the results of the recent elections to the Legislative Council and the Madras Corporation. "There seems very little need," wrote the *Mail* on February 11, "for the non-Brahmins to raise the cry that special representation is needed for the protection of their interests." In another editorial two days later it scolded the non-Brahmans for playing too much on their "backwardness."

What really set and defined the relations between all the parties concerned was the decision of the arbitrator, Lord Meston, as to the number of seats that should be reserved for non-Brahmans. In the second week of February, the Government of Madras announced that Lord Meston would arrive in Madras on February 28, and that the Legislative Council Chamber would be at the disposal of the non-Brahman representatives on February 18, and of the Brahman representatives on the 19th, for consultation and discussion. Lord Meston called a joint conference of Brahmans and non-Brahmans for March 1 to allow both sides to present their arguments. At this conference, two incidents occurred that helped to weaken the non-Brahman case and served also to illustrate the division in the non-Brahman ranks. V. Chakkarai Chetti's presence at the meeting was protested by a fellow M.P.A. member, Lodd Govindoss (an important contributor to the M.P.A. treasury,) on the grounds that Chakkarai Chetti was a Christian and that Christians had already been granted communal

representation. Later, L. K. Tulsiram, of the Justice Party, demanded that whatever happened to the rest of the non-Brahman communities, his group, the Saurashtras (weavers) should be given special electorates.[84] C. P. Ramaswami Iyer, pointing to these two instances as illustrative of the great heterogeneity of the non-Brahman caste Hindu group, said that communal representation, once introduced, would work its own destruction.

Meston's Award (as it came to be called), issued during the third week of March, stunned the non-Brahmans. His settlement called for a total reservation of only 28 seats (3 urban seats and 25 rural seats, all in plural member constituencies). In a letter to Lord Willingdon, published in the press, Lord Meston explained that the figure of 28 seats had been decided on as a convenient complement to the present constituency arrangement whereby non-Brahmans had at least one reserved seat in each territorial plural constituency. Besides administrative convenience, Meston claimed that non-Brahmans did not need a majority of reserved seats at all: "It seems sufficient to ensure them such a start in the race as will prevent their being outdistanced if they exercise ordinary energy and intelligence.[85] He had been convinced of the non-Brahmans' capacity for winning seats in representative bodies by examining statistics that were provided him by the Madras Secretariat concerning the number of non-Brahmans who held high office on the district and taluq boards. These statistics showed conclusively that in these bodies non-Brahmans had done very well. Therefore, on the basis of this information and on "general considerations," he had concluded that the "necessity of the case does not go further than the provision of a

[84] Tulsiram asserted that "Sowrashtras were not willing to be classed with non-Brahmans. They therefore stood in the position of being neither Brahman nor non-Brahman and for that reason and on account of their growing importance in commercial matters, a special electorate must be given to his community." *Madras Mail*, Mar. 2, 1920.

[85] *Hindu* (weekly ed.), Mar. 25, 1920.

reasonable minimum number of non-Brahmin seats to be supplemented by the growing political capacity of the Community."[86]

By setting the number of reserved non-Brahman seats at 28, Lord Meston had done a number of things, only a few of which were noticed by contemporaries. Most obviously, he settled a dispute that started before Montagu came to India in November, 1917, but in doing so he provoked a stiffening in the attitudes of many non-Brahmans toward Brahmans in political life. At separate meetings on March 22, the M.P.A. and the Justice Party both passed resolutions emphasizing that Brahmans would be barred from their organizations. At the same time, since the whole purpose of the M.P.A. had vanished now that the question of non-Brahman reserved seats was decided, the members were free to turn their efforts elsewhere. P. Kesava Pillai joined the Justice Party. Tiru. Vi. Kaliyanasundaram Mudaliar and E. V. Ramaswami Naicker joined forces with C. Rajagopalachariar in support of Gandhi's noncooperation campaign. Kaliyanasundaram Mudaliar gave up the editorship of the *Desabhaktan*, the M.P.A. Tamil-language daily, on July 22, 1920. It was run for a short time by V. V. S. Aiyer and then discontinued.

Finally, by settling the dispute over non-Brahman representation in the Madras Legislative Council, Lord Meston allowed the Madras government to complete its franchise arrangements for the 1920 elections. The most important of these arrangements so far as this study is concerned was the undertaking by A. R. Knapp, a member of the Madras Secretariat, who had been designated to work out details of the Reforms for the presidency, to give to the seats reserved for non-Brahmans a name that would

[86] *Ibid.* Meston's "general considerations" seem to have been that a clear majority would impair non-Brahman cohesion and the absence of some kind of common threat would result in sectarian differences. On the other hand, something less than a clear majority would give the non-Brahmans a stimulus to "strive in the electoral competition."

make the distinction as inconspicuous as possible. Knapp did not like the term "Non-Brahman Reserved Seats," though this was used by the Government of India. Commenting on the Government of India's decision to call them "Non-Brahman Reserved Seats," Knapp wrote: "I have spoken to Mr. C. P. Ramaswami Ayyar who happened to be here this morning and he is very strongly opposed to this new departure on the part of the Government of India. Among other objections, he points out that it tends to perpetuate in an undesirable manner an artificial arrangement, which, it may be hoped, will disappear in the course of time." [87] The term "Non-Brahman Reserved Seat" was in fact dropped from official use in Madras, and all general constituencies came to be called "non-Muhammadan constituencies"—under the circumstances a much less loaded term.

Thus in September, 1920, three years after the release of Mrs. Besant from internment, the political scene in Madras had taken on a new appearance. By solving the communal representation problem, which had been agitating the minds of Justice Party personnel certainly since the formation of the party in 1916, the Government of Madras had eliminated perhaps one of the biggest problems it had had to face. The peculiarity of Madras presidency's social and political structure had been recognized by the Joint Select Committee and appropriate steps had been taken to compensate for it. More than even this, the Government of Madras of 1920 was markedly different from that of 1917. Lord Pentland and Sir Alexander Cardew had left; Gillman was dead; and in Pentland's place there was now a Liberal, purposely sent to Madras to make the transition from bureaucratic to dyarchic government as painless as possible. The presence of a man like A. R. Knapp was also significant. He was not against the non-Brahmans, but he wanted to work the Reforms in the best possible

[87] MRO, Public (Reforms Section), Miscellaneous Series, G.O. 335A, May 25, 1920.

way, and his insistence that the term "Non-Brahman Reserved Seat" be dropped is indicative of this attitude.

The complete reversal of roles of the *Hindu* and the *Madras Mail* over the Meston decision revealed the change in the political climate in Madras by 1920 more strikingly. To the editor of the *Hindu*, Kasturi Ranga Iyengar, who had been willing to accept 36 seats as a reasonable number, the number given the non-Brahmans by Meston was far too low. As Kasturi Ranga Iyengar put it in his editorial on March 25, 1920, the decision would embitter and cause "profound disappointment and grave disquiet among the non-Brahmin community. . . . Lord Meston has . . . done the most incomprehensible thing of all in fixing his award at 28." The *Madras Mail*, on the other hand, had retreated from its earlier decision to help the non-Brahmans achieve communal representation as a means by which they could counter Brahman agitation for Home Rule. By 1920, too, Mrs. Besant had lost nearly all her political power. And the India Bill, which became law in December, 1919, provided sufficient safeguards for the European businessman and others whom the *Mail* represented to remove the implied threat to British authority that had been posed by the release of Mrs. Besant. Welby was no longer with the *Mail*. The *Mail* could therefore comment (Mar. 18, 1920) almost acidly in words reminiscent of those in the Southborough Committee *Report*, "We feel assured that if these [non-Brahman] gentlemen throw as much energy into the business of winning seats as they have introduced into this contest over the reservation of seats, they will find that their fears of Brahmin ascendancy have been much exaggerated."

Nationalist activity was also beginning to take on a different shape. In September, Gandhi, by means of recruitment and a measure of extraordinarily competent political coercion, got his resolutions on noncooperation and the rejection of Council entry passed at the Special Congress in Calcutta. There was great disagreement prior to the session, with much animosity between

C. Rajagopalachariar, Gandhi's chief supporter in Madras, and three other nationalist Brahmans, S. Srinivasa Iyengar, A. Rangaswami Iyengar, and S. Satyamurti.[ss] Kasturi Ranga Iyengar, too, was unhappy with the program of noncooperation and the rejection of Council entry that Gandhi proposed. Thus, even before Congress had adopted the noncooperation resolution, there was a grave difference of opinion within the Brahman leadership as to the method of proceeding toward responsible government. What made this division so enduring and disastrous, particularly during the next three years, was that in Madras, unlike any other province in India, a well-organized political party existed, the Justice Party, which not only was willing to contest the elections for the new Councils but had the money and the organization to do so. The entire mechanism and ideology of the Justice Party were geared to the new Reforms in a way that made the rejection of Council entry a particularly dangerous decision for Congress in Madras. Further, the existence of a powerful group in Madras that opposed Gandhi's philosophy of nonviolent noncooperation helped to disperse political enthusiasm and polarize political action. Between 1920 and 1923, the Madras Congress was to feel the great effects of boycotting the 1920 elections.

Finally, the difference between the political situation of September, 1917, and September, 1920, was even more dramatically symbolized by the changed position of the Justice Party itself. By its activities both in England and in Madras it had activated a large body of non-Brahmans who would have otherwise remained untouched by political propaganda. There is little doubt, also, that Mrs. Besant's fall from power, the capacity of the Justice Party to wring concessions from the Joint Select Committee, and the existence of a kind of whipping boy in the Meston decision stimulated in the Justice Party an esprit de corps in the autumn of 1920 that it had never possessed before. Although it had lost its strongest

[ss] See Hugh Owen, "The Adoption of Non-co-operation, 1920."

leader, other leaders were rapidly appearing and the party was acquiring a program for public action that was at once appropriate and moderate in its quality. It was evident that the Justice Party was better suited than any other group in Madras by 1920 to work the Reforms—Reforms that used the province as the primary unit of political education and therefore enhanced the provincial orientation of the Justice Party rather than diminished it.

Chapter 6

NONCOOPERATION, THE JUSTICE PARTY, AND WORKING THE REFORMS

Once the 1919 Reform Bill had been made law, the constitution that Montagu had worked so long and hard to construct came into operation. But the issuance of the Rowlatt *Report* and the resulting legislation, the *hartals* organized by Gandhi protesting this legislation, the Khilafat agitation, and the Jallianwallah Bagh massacre united a large segment of educated Indians in Congress to oppose the Montagu–Chelmsford Reforms. Many felt that participating in a system of government that had none of the virtues of complete self-rule and all the vices of a divided executive savored too much of defeat. Others in Congress, although disturbed by the government's action at Amritsar, considered that the Legislative Councils under the new Reforms would at least give Indians a chance to express themselves politically and in some way influence government policy.

The split between those who had confidence in the new Reforms and those who did not was illustrated particularly well in the Madras Congress organization. It was a considerable strain on some to have to accept noncooperation and the sweeping boycott of the Legislative Assembly in Delhi, the provincial Legislative Councils, the law courts, government schools, and social functions. Not everyone approved of Gandhi's political tactics. This strain was further intensified in Madras by the willingness of the Justice Party not only to cooperate with the government but to take office under the new Reforms. As a result, politics in Madras

presidency during the next five years was marked by a high degree of absorption in provincial concerns.

Justice Party Leadership, Organization, and Support

The Justice Party was able to take advantage of the opportunities afforded by the Reforms because from its inception it had been dedicated to the maintenance of the British connection. There was never any question of not participating in the 1920 elections to the new Legislative Councils. The question only concerned the character which that participation would assume.

Justice Party organization on the eve of the 1920 elections was a result of four years of canvassing for communal representation, first before Montagu and the Madras government, and then before the British public and politicians, and particularly the Joint Parliamentary Committee. This drive for communal representation forced the Justice Party to mobilize its leadership and forces for propaganda, and its success can be judged by the final grant of twenty-eight reserved seats for non-Brahmans in the Council franchise scheme for Madras. Many of those who pressed for communal representation such as O. Kandaswami Chetti did so to advance the social position of the non-Brahmans rather than in pursuit of any political ideology. But the great enthusiasm for social reform which Kandaswami Chetti brought to agitation on behalf of the Justice Party also helped it to create and maintain a party organization. Unlike the Congress, the Justice Party in 1920 was not racked by internal struggles over political aims and methods. It was committed to the use of the reformed Legislative Councils, and there was never any attempt on the part of Justice leaders or the rank and file to question this commitment; it was always unwilling to become involved in any form of violent political change. Generally speaking, throughout its existence its membership was made up primarily of older men, and it made no particular effort to attract youth.

From the beginning the Justice Party sought to imitate many

of the organizational methods and models of Congress and the Home Rule movement. In 1917 it established branches in almost all the district headquarters in the presidency, which Justice leaders from Madras city tried to visit periodically. These branches, which were the main mechanisms for building up Justice support outside the capital city, functioned effectively in the elections of 1920, though less well in those of 1923. Madras city, however, was the center of the party's activity. The main office, where regular meetings took place, was on Mount Road, and there were several branch offices in various sections of the city. The party in the 1920's did not have a written constitution. The closest it came to one was the publication of a notice in 1917 which outlined the goals of the party and the conditions for membership.[1] The political and social direction of the party was largely engineered by its leader; hence the difference between social aims under Dr. Nair and under Tyagaraja Chetti, who succeeded him. This lack of a constitution also made it possible for strong leaders like Tyagaraja Chetti to impose their will on the party without having to win majority approval of their policies. Some attempt was made to reshape the party along English political party lines after the 1920 elections. A chief whip was appointed, and the Justice members of the Legislative Council formed themselves into a Council party which set up committees to work out ways of influencing legislation passed in Council. But the party never showed any interest in putting up a candidate for the Central Legislative Assembly in Delhi. The plums of patronage and power in the Madras Council seemed enough.[2]

Deciding on a new party leader after the death of Dr. Nair in July, 1919, caused some temporary friction within the party, especially among the various members of the deputation to the Joint Select Committee in London. P. Ramarayaningar openly sought the leadership, and Reddi Naidu, hoping to sidestep trouble, gave

[1] *Hindu* (weekly ed.), Oct. 19, 1917. [2] *Ibid.*, Feb. 11, 1926.

him "clearly to understand that he was not interested in it."[3] A certain amount of quarreling over trivial matters ensued, some of it provoked by Ramaswami Mudaliar, who apparently hoped to ingratiate himself with a future leader of the party. In the end, it was neither Ramarayaningar nor Reddi Naidu but Tyagaraja Chetti who assumed leadership of the party. He was an obvious choice, since he and Dr. Nair had worked closely in building up the Justice case for the non-Brahmans. But he was in many ways less suitable as a leader than Dr. Nair, with much less education and a more limited social outlook. In 1920 he was sixty-eight years old, and he had already spent many years as a councillor of the Madras Corporation. His ideas on the nature and quality of politics were strongly influenced by Corporation concerns, and in many important aspects his political horizons were confined to the affairs of Madras city. He was much less willing than Dr. Nair had been to concede the necessity of helping to raise the position of the untouchables. His public personality was less forceful than Dr. Nair's, and he possessed none of the vividness of speech that characterized Dr. Nair's campaigning. Moreover, it was soon apparent that he was an aging man who would brook no criticisms of his judgment and actions.[4]

It was not altogether surprising that under Tyagaraja Chetti's leadership the social reform orientation of the party was blunted, even though many in the party supported it. O. Kandaswami Chetti (like Tyagaraja Chetti a Telugu Beri Chetti), the editor of the *Social Reform Advocate*, had been, with Dr. Nair, a leader in the field, but there were others, such as T. A. Ramalingam Chetti from Coimbatore and C. Natesa Mudaliar, who had done work in social reform in Madras city. Their ideas followed the lines set down in the *Dravidan* by the editor, N. Bhaktavatsalam Pillai:

[3] K. V. Reddi Naidu Diary, entry for Aug. 22, 1919.

[4] For a very favorable description of Tyagaraja Chetti's position and action in the Madras Corporation, see J. Chartres Molony, *A Book of South India* (London, 1926), pp. 154–156.

"Before giving Home Rule, education should be spread wide among the people in this country. They should acquire a knowledge of, and take an interest in public matters; social reforms should be introduced and caste distinctions done away with altogether."[5] K. V. Reddi Naidu, a Telugu Kapu, also continued his long interest in municipal and social reform. On one occasion at Negapatam, in Tanjore district, for example, he argued that the "iniquitous laws, that, for ages, maintained an invidious distinction between Brahmins and Non-Brahmins, with regard to marriage, adoption, inheritance, and the like, must be altered . . . Social equality must be established. The stain of untouchability shall be removed."[6]

Ignoring the pleas of Kandaswami Chetti and J. N. Ramanathan that the Justice Party should propagandize in favor of social reform and in particular that non-Brahman caste Hindus should reform their ways in relation to the untouchables,[7] Tyagaraja Chetti, along with his younger confidant and adviser, P. Ramarayaningar, concentrated on the other goal of the party—that of ousting the Brahmans from their position of strength in the administrative and political life of the presidency. In 1917 Dr. Nair had outlined the reasons behind this goal:

> We claim our social, moral and political rights, and our share of Government appointments, not because we think that Government appointments will transform the Non-Brahman communities into the most prosperous of mankind, but because Government appointments carry with them political power, of which, as lords of the soil and inheritors of noble traditions, they must have their legitimate share. We have repeatedly pointed out that the future of the Non-Brahman community lies in their own hands. As agri-

[5] *Dravidan*, June 19, 1917 (*Madras NNR, 1917*).

[6] Quoted in G. V. Subba Rao, *Life and Times of Sir K. V. Reddi Naidu* (Rajahmundry, 1957), pp. 78–79.

[7] See *Madras Mail*, Dec. 31, 1919, and Jē Eṉ. Ramanātan, Ākātu ["It Is Unbecoming"] (Madras, 1926).

> culturists, masters of industry and commerce and in other directions fresh efforts will have to be put forth by them, only we cannot give up political power and Government appointments as lying altogether beyond their province. If claiming political, social and moral equality with the Brahman of this Presidency is an offence, we plead guilty to it.[8]

Tyagaraja Chetti stated the goal more bluntly. "We are," he said, "nothing but slaves in the hands of the Brahmin hierarchy. It is our turn to get the ascendancy. Let us only educate ourselves and in due course we shall have our portion of Government service and political power, proportionate to our strength and importance."[9] He and Dr. Nair were agreed that the non-Brahman caste Hindus of south India did not possess the administrative or political power commensurate with their position as members of the dominant peasant groups, as the great landholders, as those who controlled much of the commerce and industry. As in the *Non-Brahmin Letters* of 1915 and the Non-Brahmin Manifesto of 1916, they urged non-Brahmans to educate themselves and to organize in order to gain the ascendancy.

The greatest support for Justice Party agitation came from the main non-Brahman caste Hindu groups in the presidency—from the Vellalas in the Tamil districts, the Reddis or Kapus and Kammas in the Telugu districts, from the Nairs of Malabar district, and from the trading groups such as the Beri Chettis and particularly the Balija Naidus who were settled all over south India. These were the "lords of the soil and inheritors of noble traditions" to whom Dr. Nair appealed in his 1917 editorial. The response was especially strong among the landowning groups, such as the Reddis and Vellalas, who were immediately beneath the Brahman in the ritual hierarchy and who considered them-

[8] *Justice*, June 2, 1917 (*Madras NNR, 1917*).

[9] T. Varadarajulu Naidu (comp.), *The Justice Movement, 1917*, Section II, p. 97.

selves to be the descendants of important kings of the Telugu and Tamil areas. They responded to the Justice Party not only with active membership but with money. But the party also attracted large numbers of middle-class, educated non-Brahmans from urban areas throughout the presidency. There were few in the party who were poor. Support in the Telugu districts, including the Circars coastal area and Rayalseema, was mostly among *zamindars* and other large landowners in whom those areas abounded. There were several important middle-class, educated non-Brahman members from Andhra, including Reddi Naidu, Koka Appa Rao Naidu, and A. P. Patro, but support of this type was not so common in the Telugu areas as it was in the Tamil areas. This can be attributed to the fact that, as a witness before the Joint Parliamentary Committee put it, "The relations between Brahmins and non-Brahmins in the Telugu area is [*sic*] more cordial and harmonious than it is in the South."[10] By the same token, the noncooperation movement was much more successful in Andhra than it was further south.

In the Tamil area, and in the Malayalam-speaking Malabar district, the Justice Party derived its main support from middle-class, educated non-Brahman caste Hindus such as T. M. Nair, J. N. Ramanathan, C. Natesa Mudaliar, S. A. Somasundaram Pillai, and T. Sivagnanam Pillai (Justice Minister of Development from 1923 to 1926). Another important aspect of Justice Party leadership was the presence of a number of bilingual persons, residents of Madras city or of the Tamil districts, whose orientation was at least partly colored by the fact that their mother tongue was Telugu. O. Kandaswami Chetti and his half-brother, O. Tanikachala Chetti, P. Tyagaraja Chetti (Beri Chettis), and A. Sub-

[10] Great Britain, Parliamentary Papers, Vol. IV (*Reports of Committees*, Vol. II), House of Commons Paper No. 203, November, 1919, "Joint Select Committee on the Government of India Bill, Vol. II: Minutes of Evidence," Q. 5273 by Lord Selborne answered by V. Chakkarai Chetti, p. 298.

barayulu Reddiar (from South Arcot district) at one time or another played an important role in Justice affairs.

Winning the Election and Forming a Ministry

In the 1920 elections Madras city, a political center with the Andhra and Madras Provincial Congress Committees as well as the main Justice Party headquarters, had the largest electoral turnout in the presidency. In the constituencies within the city, out of an electorate of 16,555, some 8,644, or 52 percent, went to the polls; of these constituencies, Mylapore, traditionally considered a Brahman area, had the largest turnout.[11] The percentage of voters varied considerably in the rest of the presidency, especially in the areas affected by rains and flooding, and the over-all average of voting was 24.9 percent. This was in fact relatively high, given the boycott of the elections by the Congress, along with the increase of the electorate. With 2.9 percent of the total population eligible, many were illiterate and totally inexperienced in voting procedures. As the *Mail* pointed out (Dec. 1), participation in the election seemed weak in comparison with a parliamentary election in England, but it was nonetheless an impressive demonstration of the growing political consciousness in the presidency.

When the votes were in and the returns compiled, the Justice Party, which had had little or no opposition, carried the day. Out of 98 elected seats, Justice members won 63. With the support the party received from members of the Madras Legislative Council who were government appointees, it could claim a total strength of 81 out of a council numbering 127. The caste breakdown was as follows: 65 non-Brahman Hindus, 22 Brahmans, 5 Muslims, 14 Indian Christians, and 5 outcastes (official appointees).[12]

[11] *Madras Mail*, Dec. 1, 1920.

[12] All the figures in this paragraph are drawn from the tables in Great Britain, Indian Statutory Commission, Vol. VI, *Memorandum Submitted to the Indian Statutory Commission by the Madras Government* (London, 1930), p. 17.

The Justice Party owed its victory partly to the Congress boycott, but it had also done some effective campaigning. K. V. Reddi Naidu, for example, toured a number of the Tamil districts in October, on the eve of voting, urging people to cast their ballots for the Justice Party and to oppose Gandhi and noncooperation. Even Tyagaraja Chetti went on a tour, giving speeches variously in Tamil, Telugu, or English, when his speeches were translated for the benefit of non-English speakers.[13] The Justice Party, far more than Congress, tended to rely on the use of English during its campaigns.

Lord Willingdon, the Governor, in order to constitute Madras' first ministry under the reformed Councils, wrote to Tyagaraja Chetti, the acknowledged leader of the Justice Party, asking him to form a ministry. Tyagaraja Chetti declined the offer,[14] but he suggested three other candidates: A. Subbarayulu Reddiar, a Telugu Kapu who had been president of Cuddalore municipality in South Arcot district (a Tamil majority district) and now headed the South Arcot District Board; P. Ramarayaningar, a Telugu-speaking Velama *zamindar* from Chittoor district and K. V. Reddi Naidu. Reddi Naidu had long experience as a municipal councillor for Ellore, in the Godavari district,[15] between 1907 and 1920 and had at various times been a member of the Ellore Taluq Board and the Kistna District Board. Ramarayaningar had an M.A. in Sanskrit from Madras University, and Reddi Naidu was educated first at Madras Christian College and

[13] See *Madras Mail*, Oct. 9, 1920, and Sept. 18 and 20, 1920.

[14] Replying to Chetti's refusal, Willingdon summarized Chetti's reasons: "You told me that you were very anxious to carry on yr important duties as President of the Madras Corporation, particularly at this juncture when there are important development schemes before you. In the second place I think you felt that it would be a great strain upon yrself to undertake the daily duties of a Minister's portfolio." Letter from Lord Willingdon to P. Tyagaraja Chetti, Dec. 9, 1920, in the possession of P. N. Marthandam Pillai.

[15] At that time Godavari district had not been divided into East and West Godavari districts.

then at the Madras Law College, where he took a B.L. Willingdon finally appointed Subbarayulu Reddiar as "chief" minister in December, 1920, and put him in charge of the Education portfolio. In April, 1921, Reddiar resigned on the grounds of ill-health.[16] He was replaced as Education Minister by A. P. Patro, an Oriya Kalinga lawyer who also spoke Telugu, from Behrampore in Ganjam district.[17] P. Ramarayaningar, the Minister for Local Self-Government, took over the duties of chief minister. Reddi Naidu was appointed Minister of Development.

Victory for the Justice Party in the 1920 Madras elections and the formation of a Justice ministry were, in a way, appropriate for the working of the Reforms in Madras. The leadership and program of the party were geared to the Reforms to a remarkable degree: the leadership was moderate, if not conservative, with no all-India aspirations; the program was one that could be carried out with the mechanisms supplied by the Reforms, and it was concerned with issues that were of a provincial rather than an all-India nature. This absorption in provincial concerns was partly the outcome of the Reforms scheme, since the government departments handed over to ministers responsible to the elected representatives of the people—Education, Excise, Public Works, Local Boards, Public Health, Municipalities, Cooperative Societies, and Fisheries—could be considered as only an extension of the municipal functions of government established by Lord Ripon's Act of 1883. Any party that conscientiously undertook to administer this system would almost inevitably have to concern itself primarily with local affairs which had little relation to the national interest.

What made this situation particularly significant in Madras presidency during the Justice ministries of 1920 and 1923 was that the Justice leaders who undertook the responsibility for the

[16] He died a few months later. See the *Hindu*, Nov. 25, 1921.
[17] *Ibid.*, July 7, 1921.

transferred departments were experienced in municipal needs and government. Long before the Montagu–Chelmsford *Report*, Dr. Nair, speaking at Erode, repeated the argument made by many Englishmen about Indian political development—that the best means to self-government was education in the mechanisms of local government.[18] Nair, as well as K. V. Reddi and A. P. Patro, had written about municipal government,[19] and Tyagaraja Chetti had spent nearly forty-two years as councillor on the Madras Corporation.[20] Finally, T. N. Sivagnanam Pillai, a Tamil Vellala from Tinnevelly district who replaced Reddi Naidu in the second Justice ministry of 1923, was a retired deputy collector and president of the Tinnevelly District Board.[21]

The problem of patronage also helped to rivet the attention of ministers and members of the Legislative Council on municipal affairs. The privilege of appointing District Board chairmen was one of the plums of the office of Minister for Local Self-Government. Attempts to wrest this power from the minister began in the Legislative Council only a month after it began its sessions in January, 1921, when P. Shiva Rao, a Brahman from Bellary district, introduced a resolution that each District Board should have the right to appoint its own chairman. Continuing the debate, C. V. S. Narasimharaju, later to join the ranks of Congress, complained that until 1921 the appointments had been made by disinterested bureaucrats who had "always held the scales even"; now that the appointments were in the hands of a politician, and

[18] *New India*, July 24, 1915.

[19] Nair's book was *Principles and Practice of Municipal Government* (1916). Reddi Naidu contributed many articles on local government to the *Indian Patriot*, and these were published under the title *The New Municipal Rules with Questions and Answers in the Madras Legislative Council* (Madras, 1910). Patro wrote a book on rural economics and one entitled *Studies in Local Self-Government, Education and Sanitation* (Madras, 1912?).

[20] *Hindu*, Oct. 25, 1923. He retired from the Corporation in 1923.

[21] *Ibid.*, June 16, 1936.

a member of the Justice Party, he feared they would become nothing but a party weapon.[22] The resolution was defeated, but two years later the subject was again debated. A Swaraj Party member of the Legislative Council, T. Adinarayana Chetti, suggested that it was very likely that appointive powers had been misused by the Minister for Local Self-Government and that it was probably true also that "inefficient people were nominated while really better and capable men were available."[23] There is considerable evidence to suggest that P. Ramarayaningar (who in 1922 became the Rajah of Panagal), as Minister for Local Self-Government in both the 1920 and 1923 Justice ministries, did exploit to the fullest advantage his position as "broker." Indeed, abuse of these powers became so apparent that by 1926 it was an election issue and was probably one of the major reasons for the Justice defeat.

The Justice Party and Gandhi

The Justice Party had demonstrated its remarkable isolation by its demands for communal representation for south Indian non-Brahmans, by its unwillingness to condemn the massacre at Amritsar, and by its willingness to participate in the 1920 elections. It cut itself off even more from all-India affairs by its complete disavowal of Gandhi and his program of noncooperation. To most Justice members Gandhi, as an exponent of "anarchy," represented a threat to ordered and constituted authority and to the British position in India. His boycott of the Councils, courts, and government schools as well as his emphasis on *khadi* (handspinning and weaving) were thought by Justice members to be deceptions under the cover of which disorder could be encouraged. Consistently, the Justice Party, both unofficially on the Council and officially through party propaganda, did all it could to oppose Gandhi's ideas.

By far the most articulate weapon of the Justice Party against

[22] *MLCP*, I (Feb. 17, 1921), 280. [23] *Ibid.*, XV (Dec. 13, 1923), 423.

noncooperation was its English-language newspaper, *Justice*. This was supplemented by the Tamil-language *Dravidan*, edited in 1920 by P. N. Raman Pillai, and to a much lesser extent by the Telugu paper, *Andhra Prakasika*, which had been forced to change to a weekly in mid-1919.[24] *Justice* described Gandhi early in 1921 as "the least tolerant and most vain of public men," a "sort of autocrat" trading on his popularity among the illiterate masses in order to propagate false doctrines.[25] When violence broke out in Malabar in the form of the Moplah rebellion, which occurred in connection with the Khilafat movement, the *Dravidan* commented that Gandhi was preparing to "convert this country into a cremation ground before it attains Swaraj."[26] The Justice Party took the view that violence was an integral part of Gandhi's campaign.[27]

Gandhi's abandonment of noncooperation after the clash between demonstrators and police at Chauri Chaura in February, 1922, and the passage of the Bardoli decisions did little to win over the Justice Party. *Justice* wondered how far these decisions would be honored by the great number of "hooligans and rowdies" who had joined the noncooperation movement in order to "indulge in their nefarious predilections towards violence and lawlessness."[28] Gandhi was still "every inch a revolutionary of the most virulent type," who was adept in the "art of dissimulation" in order to win the support and sympathy of hundreds of

[24] The editor, A. C. Parthasarathi Naidu, tried to persuade the Madras government to subsidize the daily. "I can undertake if so ordered to go about and preach in 4 languages and convert prejudiced people with the thrill of my polyglot speeches," he wrote to A. Y. G. Campbell, government Chief Secretary, on April 23, 1919. But his request was denied. See MRO, Home (Misc.), Ordinary Series, G.O. 932, May 24, 1919.

[25] *Justice*, Jan. 15, 1921 (*Madras NNR, 1921*).

[26] *Dravidan*, Sept. 19, 1921 (*Madras NNR, 1921*).

[27] *Ibid.*, Feb. 8, 1922 (*Madras NNR, 1922*).

[28] *Justice*, Feb. 13, 1922 (*Madras NNR, 1922*).

ignorant people.[29] Only Gandhi's imprisonment caused *Justice* to moderate its position. Speaking of the difference in point of view, *Justice* said:

> This difference in political opinion has, all the same, never blinded us to a full recognition of the high qualities of moral worth and intellectual capacity that have distinguished the Mahatma and singled him out from among the ranks of patriots and politicians who have figured in the public life of our country in the past. Indeed, in point of patriotism and love for country, there is scarcely another politician in the India of today who would be said to be more disinterested and self-sacrificing than the Mahatma.[30]

This description was perhaps the closest the Justice Party ever came toward an appreciation of Gandhi's skills and his contribution to the Indian national movement.

The Justice Party never came round to Gandhi's *khadi* campaign. One party member, an Indian Christian named Mariadas Ratnaswami, wrote a remarkably critical pamphlet entitled *The Political Philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi* (1920), in which he sought to refute Gandhi's arguments against industrialization, as expressed in his *Hind Swaraj*, first published in 1909 but reprinted in Madras in 1919 and 1920. K. V. Reddi Naidu, the Minister of Development and Industries in the Justice ministry between 1923 and 1926, summed up Justice attitudes toward hand labor when he stated: "To my mind, it is something ridiculous and ludicrous to say that the human hand can compete with machinery. It is as much as saying that a double bullock cart can compete with a motor or a steam run train." Patriotism, he argued, should be tempered with "a sense of prudence and not be clouded over by impatient enthusiasm." If prudence were discarded, no matter how legitimate the goals, only "disorder, chaos and bloodshed"

[29] *Justice*, Feb. 28, 1922 (*Madras NNR, 1922*).
[30] *Ibid.*, Mar. 10, 1922 (*Madras NNR, 1922*).

would ensue.[31] Reddi Naidu was only one of many Justice leaders who toured the province giving speeches against noncooperation. Several months before the start of the noncooperation campaign early in 1921, Tyagaraja Chetti in an interview called the proposed enterprise "All talk — if you will pardon the word 'gas.'"[32] When the noncooperators tried to turn their words into action in a no-tax campaign in Guntur district, some non-Brahmans, hoping to counteract its effects, called a conference in Amalapuram and staged a demonstration in a nearby town.[33] In the Tamil districts, where the Justice Party was stronger, the campaign against noncooperation was more successful,[34] partly because of help from the *Mail*. The *Mail* disliked Gandhi even more than the Justice Party did, but since the fading of the Home Rule threat it had rather cooled toward the Justice Party, as it frankly admitted, because of the party's "indiscriminating sentiment of anti-Brahminism."[35] The energy and enterprise displayed by the party in its anti-noncooperation campaigns brought the *Mail* back to a wholehearted support of the party and its activities. It especially liked the way in which one Justice leader, at a non-Brahman conference at Tinnevelly, asserted that if *swaraj* were to be attained it ought to be as a result of the efforts of non-Brahmans. The *Mail*

[31] *Ibid.*, June 3 and July 18, 1921, quoted in Subba Rao, *Reddi Naidu*, pp. 100 and 110–111.

[32] *Madras Mail*, Sept. 10, 1920.

[33] *Ibid.*, Feb. 3, 1921. For an account of Justice Party meetings by Reddi Naidu and Ramarayaningar in Masulipatam in Kistna district, and in Behrampore, in Ganjam district, see *ibid.*, Nov. 2 and 9, 1921.

[34] For the activities of the Justice Party against noncooperation in Coimbatore, see the *Hindu* (weekly ed.), Apr. 28, 1921; in Chingleput, *Madras Mail*, Sept. 12, 1921; and in Kumbakonam, in Tanjore district, *ibid.*, Apr. 10, 1922.

[35] *Madras Mail*, July 26, 1920. "But we readily admit that the non-Brahmins have attained a political power which reflects the greatest credit upon the energy of their leaders and the loyalty and enterprise of the community."

said that the non-Brahmans had "denounced the non-co-operators and their pernicious methods in no uncertain terms."[36]

What the *Mail* characterized as the Justice Party's "indiscriminate sentiment of anti-Brahminism" was, in fact, one of the underlying reasons for the party's distrust of Gandhi.[37] These staunch non-Brahmans believed that Gandhi, though not a Brahman himself, limited his associations to Brahmans. When Gandhi came to Madras in the spring of 1921 he did little by his speeches to alter this impression. In April, speaking to an audience at Triplicane beach, Gandhi described the nature of "true Brahminism" and emphasized the contribution that Brahmans had made to Indian culture.[38] To the Justice Party, this was added proof that he was playing the Brahmanical game. *Justice* (Apr. 9) described the occasion scornfully:

> The meeting was presided over by local Brahman politicians of the Gandhi persuasion, and Mr. Gandhi himself was surrounded by Brahmans of both sexes. A band of them came to the meeting singing hymns. They broke cocoanuts in front of Mr. Gandhi, burnt camphor and presented him with holy water in a silver basin. There were other marks of deification and, naturally, the vanity of the man was flattered beyond measure. He held forth on the glories of Brahmanism and Brahmanical culture. Not even knowing even the elements of Dravidian culture, Dravidian philosophy, Dravidian literature, Dravidian languages and Dravidian history, this

[36] *Ibid.*, July 14, 1921. "They have been able to get three of their own men into the Ministry and have a dominating voice in the policy of the Government. This is not surprising when it is remembered that the non-Brahmins are the prop and mainstay of the administration, paying almost the whole of the taxes collected and forming the great majority of the electors. The non-Brahmins, therefore, have a claim to control the expenditure of the taxpayers' money." " 'If Swaraj is to be attained'," said one of the Ministers, " 'it was to be attained by the non-Brahmin community.' " See also *ibid.*, Sept. 20, 1921.

[37] *Dravidan*, June 28, 1922 (*Madras NNR, 1922*).

[38] *Hindu*, Apr. 9, 1921.

> Gujarathi gentleman extolled the Brahmans to the skies at the expense of the non-Brahmans; and the Brahmans present must have been supremely pleased and elated.[39]

Kandaswami Chetti wrote to the editor of *Young India*, Gandhi's journal, suggesting that Gandhi would have been well advised to leave the Brahman versus non-Brahman issue alone, since he had no conception of Dravidian culture and the "inner meaning and causes of the present non-Brahmin movement":

> He does not seem to have recognized the special features of the Dravidian civilization which marks off South India from the rest of India. In praising the Brahmins for their contribution to the religion and civilization of India (probably he meant North India), he has involuntarily cast a slur on the Non-Brahmins whose ancestors have also contributed as much if not more than the Brahmins to the glory of South India as seen in their literature, religion and philosophy.[40]

Gandhi's reply was that the claims and glories of Dravidian civilization were undiminished by the service of the Brahmans to Hinduism: "I warn the correspondents against separating the Dravidian South from the Aryan North. The India of today is a blend not only of two, but of many other cultures."[41] It should be pointed out that Gandhi was certainly not unaware of Tamil literature and what it meant to those who spoke Tamil. Ten months later, writing to C. Rajagopalachariar, who had been imprisoned at Vellore for his noncooperation activities, Gandhi noted, "And I do envy your spinning wheel and Ramayana. The latter, I hope, is not a wretched translation of Valmiki, but the

[39] *Justice*, Apr. 9, 1921 (*Madras NNR, 1921*).

[40] Letter from O. Kandaswami Chetti to the editor of *Young India*, dated Apr. 11, 1921, in M. K. Gandhi, *Young India, 1919–1922; With a Brief Sketch of the Non-Co-Operation Movement by Babu Rajendra Prasad* (2d ed.; Madras, 1924), pp. 425–426. Kandaswami Chetti's letter appeared in *Young India* on April 27, 1921.

[41] Gandhi, *Young India, 1919–1922*, p. 426.

original of Kamban of which I have read so much in [G. U.] Pope's Tamil Handbook."[42]

Though Gandhi's presence in Madras was welcomed by many,[43] his teachings were less effective there than elsewhere in India. Local divisions in Congress, and the Justice Party's campaign, supported by the *Mail*, all worked against him in south India, particularly in the Tamil districts. Noncooperation and hand-spinning could never appeal to the leaders of a party whose central interest was the enhancement of non-Brahman power and position through the retention of the British and participation in the reformed Councils. For these reasons, Gandhi seems to have had little effect on the Justice Party except to galvanize it into further opposition and to insulate it still more from nationalist activity in other parts of India.

The Justice Party and the Untouchables

Very soon after taking office the Justice Party severed its connections with the untouchable groups. Once in power, it became almost entirely a caste Hindu party with little interest in social reform. As we have seen, under the leadership of Dr. Nair, and others like Kandaswami Chetti and Natesa Mudaliar, the party tried to give untouchable leaders a chance to express their opinion about Justice policy—though there were rebuffs, as at the Spur Tank meeting in October, 1917. Under the leadership of Tyagaraja Chetti and Ramarayaningar, with decisions made not in the Justice Party office in Mount Road but in the exclusive Cosmo-

[42] C. Rajagopalachariar, *Rajaji's 1920 Jail Life: A Day to Day Record of Sri C. Rajagopalachariar's Life in Vellore Jail in 1920* (rev. ed.; Madras, 1941), entry for Feb. 11, 1922, p. 100. (The date in the title is incorrect. Rajagopalachariar was, as the entry indicates, in jail in 1921–1922.) See also M. K. Gandhi, *My Experiments with Truth*, p. 166.

[43] Even the unfriendly *Madras Mail* conceded that 10,000 people listened to Gandhi in Madras in September, 1921 (*Madras Mail*, Sept. 16, 1921). Gandhi's speeches for this period will be found in their entirety in Vol. XVIII of the *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi* (Delhi, 1966).

politan Club, the allegiance of Justicites to their own caste Hindu groups reasserted itself, and the untouchables were gradually pushed out of the Justice Party.[44] This caste feeling became so intense, in fact, that it threw the Justice Party into unusual opposition to the Government of Madras over the question of labor disputes.

What ultimately broke beyond repair the ties that bound the Vellalas, Beri Chettis, Balija Naidus, Kammas, and Kapus (all non-Brahman caste Hindus) with the untouchables was a series of incidents that came to be known locally as the Puliyanthope troubles, after the words *Puliyan* and *tope*, that is, "the place where Puliyans [untouchables] live." On May 11, 1921, textile workers, both outcastes and caste Hindus, went on strike in the Carnatic Mill in Madras city. On June 20 the workers in the Buckingham Mill in Madras followed suit. The untouchables were rather quickly persuaded that they should return to work, but the caste Hindus were determined to continue the strike and turned on the untouchables. During July and August a great deal of violence occurred. In the clashes between the caste Hindus and the police who were guarding the mills, the police resorted to guns in self-defense and several caste Hindus were killed. The caste Hindus accused the Labour Commissioner appointed by the Madras government of coddling the untouchables and of supporting the police in their use of firearms, and by these actions pre-

[44] In an interview in the *Madras Mail* (June 6, 1923) Arogiaswamy Pillai, a Vellala from Coimbatore and friend of Kandaswami Chetti, gave this explanation: "Myself and Rao Bahadur O. Kandaswami Chetti were co-workers for a long time, and my friend, Mr. Chettiar still thinks that the Non-Brahmin movement has changed its original ideas inasmuch as the original party consisted not only of non-Brahmin [caste] Hindus, but also of Muhammadans, Indian Christians and Audhi Dravidas and Dr. Nair had the very same ideas when he started the movement. I do not blame the leaders of the Non-Brahmin movement for this estranged attitude adopted towards other communities but I think the recent Reforms have brought about this undesirable policy."

cluding a solution to the problem. On September 7 *Justice* said: "Public opinion . . . holds [that] the present deplorable state of affairs has been brought about partly at all events by the undue pampering of the Adi-Dravidas [untouchables] by the officials of the Labour Department, and partly by the, perhaps, unconscious encouragement given to them by a few police officers."[45]

The Justice Party was particularly angered at government condonment of these acts of violence against the caste Hindus. Specifically, it resented the way the government dismissed a report on the situation by Tyagaraja Chetti, Muhammad Usman, Ramaswami Mudaliar, and Natesa Mudaliar. According to the government, this non-Brahman report was no more than "the reproduction of fears and anxieties expressed to the signatories by the members of the Caste community in the Mill area . . . The Government can hardly accept these apprehensions as proof that the responsibility for the disturbances rests on one side only. The history of these troubles is sufficient to rebut any such assumption, and the Government are well aware that feelings of anxiety and terror are wide-spread in the Adi-Dravida community of the city."[46] O. Tanikachala Chetti brought the controversy to a head by moving a motion for an adjournment of the Legislative Council on October 12 in order to discuss the labor disputes. The debate that followed was extremely acrimonious. The Justice Party accused the Madras government of intimidating caste Hindus in the mill area. Two members of the Executive Council, K. Srinivasa Iyengar, a Brahman Law Member, and Sir Lionel Davidson, the Home Member, defended the Government's position and the

[45] *Justice*, Sept. 7, 1921 (*Madras NNR, 1921*).

[46] *Hindu*, Sept. 7, 1921. Tyagaraja Chetti's proposals included, among others, the following: "The Ali-Dravidas should not be kept together in one camp or near each other in the affected area. The Ali-Dravida camps should be removed outside the limits of Madras and they should not be kept together." *Ibid.* (weekly ed.), Sept. 8, 1921.

actions of T. E. Moir, the Labour Commissioner. Sir Lionel put the blame for the violence squarely on the caste Hindus. "It is," he said, "no longer merely a labour dispute confined to strikers and non-strikers, but a faction fight inflamed by caste prejudices."[47]

The untouchables agreed completely with the Home Member. One untouchable reader of the *Mail* condemned the Justice Party in the same terms in which Dr. Nair had condemned south Indian Brahmans. The report by Tyagaraja Chetti and his colleagues represented nothing but "an ignoble attempt to bring into force against the Authi-Dravidas the pernicious principles enunciated by the greatest tyrant known to history, Manu."[48] M. C. Rajah, the principal representative of the untouchables in the Legislative Council, also felt that Sir Lionel had assessed the situation correctly. If the denunciations of the untouchables by Justice Party members did indeed represent non-Brahman policy, he said, the untouchables would be obliged to sever their connection with the Justice Party:

> I am astonished . . . at a section of the party which claims to stand for the depressed and the oppressed classes countenancing the persecution and the reign of terror to which my community is at present subjected. I do not believe that this section voiced the real opinion or attitude of the Council nor of the non-Brahman party throughout the Presidency. The position of my community is simply this. We believe at present the view of Mr. Thanikachala Chettiyar that the Government are siding [with] the Adi-Dravidas is not shared by the members of the wide non-Brahman party in this country. If however they are, we have no option but to cut ourselves aloof from that party; and in doing so, I appeal with all the force at my command to all the moderate members of this

[47] *MLCP*, III (Oct. 12, 1921), 1028.

[48] *Madras Mail*, Sept. 17, 1921. This point was noted by the *Andhra Patrika*: the untouchables "make use of the same arguments against the Justice Party, as the latter employs against the Brahmans." *Andhra Patrika*, Apr. 6, 1923 (*Madras NNR, 1923*).

> House, to the non-Brahmans, the Brahmans and the Europeans alike in this Council to say that this campaign to excite public feeling against my community, to deprive them ot their legitimate rights and to reduce them once more to the political, social and economic bondage of ages, shall cease.[49]

It was not long before Rajah and the untouchables had left the Justice Party altogether. In mid-1923 at the second South India Adi-Dravida Congress at Koilpatti in Tinnevelly district, Rajah said that the Justice Party's "natural animosity" toward the untouchables was patent long before the Puliyanthope troubles. "It is the high-handed poisonous action of members of a party who after inflicting all known and unknown injury on our community shed crocodile tears and pose as friends of the Depressed Classes."[50]

This treatment of the untouchables illustrates two important changes that had occurred in the Justice Party. First, the party's unwillingness to allow the untouchables a role in its policy indicates the closing of party ranks to include only caste Hindus with a relatively high position in the ritual hierarchy, an established position in government service and education, and a strong investment in the land and commerce of south India. The aim of the Justice Party was to enable these non-Brahmans to supplant the Brahmans, while keeping the untouchables at a good economic, educational, and political distance. Second, not only had the social role of the Justice Party become narrower and more conservative, but election to the Council and the formation of a Justice ministry had changed the party from the idealistic reform association which Dr. Nair had intended it to be into a mere

[49] *MLCP*, III (Oct. 12, 1921), 1013.

[50] Quoted in M. C. Rajah, *The Oppressed Hindus* (Madras, 1925), p. 64. A paper published in Mysore said, "The interests of thousands of non-Brahman communities are criminally left in the background and a few Rajas and Chettis pose as the representatives of all non-Brahman communities." *Sampad Abhudaya*, Jan. 22, 1923 (*Madras NNR, 1923*).

political mechanism, a broker for government jobs for a few select non-Brahman caste Hindus.

Noncooperation in Madras

During 1919 and 1920, C. Rajagopalachariar, a Sri Vaishnava Tamil Brahman lawyer from Salem who was an ardent supporter of Gandhi, attempted to convert the Madras wing of the Congress Party into an active pro-Gandhi organization. He encountered difficulties, many of which were a result of the political situation created by the foundation of the Home Rule movement, the Justice Party, and the drive for a separate Andhra. In 1917 the Telugu-speakers in Andhra were granted a separate Congress organizational unit or province. At the Nagpur Congress session in December, 1920, Congress work in south India was divided among Tamil-, Malayalam-, and Kanarese-speaking persons, and each of these linguistic groups was given a separate Congress "circle" similar to the one that had been granted to the Telugu area three years before. As a result, Rajagopalachariar was faced with a greatly diminished constituency in a Madras presidency Congress organization that, aside from a minority of Kanarese-speakers and Malayalis from Malabar district, was largely Tamil-speaking. His audience, moreover, was by no means committed to the principle of noncooperation. In August, 1919, for instance, a Madras Provincial Congress conference on the problem was held, but the attention was small and opinion was divided. The *Madras Mail* reporter ascribed the comparative smallness of the conference partly to the fact that the Telugu-speakers in Congress now held separate conferences of their own. However, "even in the Tamil Districts," the *Mail* continued, "differences in matters of detail of reforms would seem to have made its own contribution to the diminished size of a political meeting held in the name of the whole presidency."[51] Other conferences during the

[51] *Madras Mail*, Aug. 25, 1919.

following months suggest that Congress politics in Madras presidency were characterized not only by antipathies between Telugus and Tamils, between pro-Reformers and anti-Reformers, but also between those who were interested mainly in provincial problems as opposed to those who had national interests. The *Hindu*, for example, commented on the fact that these conferences, well attended or not, at least indicated the refusal by some Congress members to "play a purely parochial part" in politics.[52] As the time approached when Congress had to decide whether or not to contest the forthcoming elections and cooperate with the government, the differences of opinion between those in favor of the Reforms and those anxious to disown them were intensified.

Five months before the annual Congress meeting in Calcutta, at two meetings in April, 1920, S. Satyamurti, secretary of the Congress delegation to the Joint Select Committee in London in 1919, and Kasturi Ranga Iyengar of the *Hindu* both opted to contest the elections to the Legislative Councils.[53] But in June the delegates to the Madras Provincial Congress Committee (M.P.C.C.) meeting at Tinnevelly, at the urging of Rajagopalachariar, passed a resolution supporting noncooperation.[54] From then on—until the Special Congress at Calcutta and after—the two sides carried on a war of words. Kasturi Ranga Iyengar, in the *Hindu*, day after day made a point of criticizing the Gandhian proposals for Council boycott. Gandhi's boycott of the government courts and schools was "impracticable," the *Hindu* editor told the M.P.C.C., part of a program that Gandhi had drawn up without consulting "other political leaders in the country"; as a matter of fact, he said, the noncooperation scheme was not unique or even new.[55] After the boycott and noncooperation resolution

[52] *Hindu* (weekly ed.), Sept. 25, 1919.
[53] *Madras Mail*, Apr. 19 and 22, 1920.
[54] *Ibid.*, June 24, 1920.
[55] *Ibid.*, Aug. 16, 1920; *Hindu*, Aug. 17, 1920, and weekly ed., Sept. 2, 1920.

had been passed at the Calcutta Congress session in September he again attacked Gandhi's proposals:

> It is perhaps [more] India's misfortune than Mr. Gandhi's fault that he should be possessed of a mind so mercilessly logical. Prepared himself for the greatest of sacrifices, it is open to question whether he does not impose upon his following conditions the rigour of which is greater than it can bear . . . We have often insisted on the necessity of hastening slowly in the matter of Non-co-operation, the need for preparing the ground by vigorous propaganda and for making a beginning with steps that are likely to find acceptance by the majority of the people . . . His merciless logic carries him from position to position and as he expounds his scheme one becomes aware of implications that few thinking politicians will agree to consider practicable.[56]

Kasturi Ranga Iyengar's opposition to the boycott propositions was partly a reaction to Gandhi's hostility toward him over his known stand on noncooperation, but he had another reason. He was skeptical of the good faith of Gandhi's statement that those who were unable to accept noncooperation in full should still continue to work with provincial Congress organizations. As Kasturi Ranga Iyengar saw the situation, these organizations were subject to a "process of skillfull maneuvering and manipulation" by which those like himself who were willing to cooperate were being forced out by Rajagopalachariar.[57] Soon after the Calcutta Congress session, Kasturi Ranga Iyengar resigned as president of the M.P.C.C. Satyamurti, one of the secretaries, also resigned.[58] Their resignations were in consonance with the considerable opposition that the boycott resolution had met from the Madras Congress delegation—since 1919 largely composed of members

[56] *Ibid.*, Sept. 16, 1920.

[57] *Ibid.*, Aug. 11, 1920.

[58] See V. K. Narasimhan, *Kasturi Ranga Iyengar*, pp. 190–191, and a letter to the editor from S. Satyamurti, *Hindu* (weekly ed.), Oct. 21, 1920.

from the Tamil area. At the Calcutta meeting, Andhra delegates voted 59–12 in favor of the boycott resolution—showing the support that Gandhi had in the Telugu districts. Within the Madras presidency delegation, which was largely Tamil, the vote was much closer: 161–145 in favor of the boycott.[59]

Another dimension of Madras' unwillingness to fall in line with Gandhi and the Congress decisions was demonstrated by S. Srinivasa Iyengar, a Sri Vaishnava Brahman. He, along with Satyamurti and Rangaswami Iyengar, voted against the boycott resolution, but Satyamurti and Rangaswami Iyengar in the end accepted the Congress resolution and did not stand for election. Srinivasa Iyengar, however, held firm, declaring that no "resolution adopted by the Congress as a measure of religious or quasi-religious discipline and self-sacrifice can be binding"[60] except upon those who voted for it. In the election, he contested the seat for Madras University in the Legislative Council and won.

With this division in the ranks of the Congress leadership in Madras, the efforts of those committed to non-cooperation met with a limited and guarded response, particularly in the Tamil districts. One correspondent to the *Hindu*, commenting on the reaction of Madras presidency to the Congress boycott of the Legislative Council elections, wrote that the presence of the Justice Party in the presidency made the boycott an extraordinarily "difficult sacrifice," and he went on to describe succinctly the dilemma that had faced many:

> It meant in other provinces the suffering involved in allowing an unrepresentative body of Moderates to take charge of immediate administration of several departments of Government and have the ear of the bureaucracy generally. But in this province it meant the voluntary surrender of a considerable degree of power for mischief to a party which placed the interests of particular commu-

[59] *Hindu* (weekly ed.), Sept 16, 1920.
[60] *Ibid.*, Sept. 23, 1920.

nities above the call of the country as a whole and openly propagated the most bitter sentiments against a minority which had hitherto played the most prominent part in public affairs.[61]

As a consequence, the boycott of the elections in late 1920 was only moderately effective.[62] Other phases of the noncooperation movement were also unsuccessful in Madras presidency: lawyers, as Kasturi Ranga Iyengar had predicted, did not boycott the courts, even though Dr. P. Varadarajulu Naidu in his journal *Tamil Nadu* urged them to do so.[63] *Desabhaktan*, under the editorship of V. V. S. Aiyer, a former terrorist and associate of the Tamil poet Subramania Bharati, had to admit that, even in the matter of the boycott of foreign cloth, "the Tamil land does not show as much interest as the other provinces."[64]

Many Congress leaders were dismayed at the lack of interest in the boycott, despite the many appeals of the Tamil press (particularly that of Kaliyanasundaram Mudaliar's weekly *Nava Sakti*).[65] Yakub Hussain, who mobilized the Muslim Moplahs in Malabar as part of the Khilafat movement, thought the reason might be that the Tamils—not to their credit—were "comparatively free from the storm and stress" that had overtaken other parts of India.[66] Rajagopalachariar, in prison because of his noncooperation activities, noted that "Disobedience is going on in a slow way in Tamil Nadu," but he resigned himself to the "humdrum routine" of Congress activities in the Tamil areas because "I suppose nothing better can be done with a people whose daily concerns and anxieties are all absorbing, and to

[61] *Ibid.*, June 23, 1921.

[62] MRO, Public (Reforms), G.O. 706, Nov. 2, 1920; Great Britain, Indian Statutory Commission, Vol. VI, *Memorandum Submitted to the Indian Statutory Commission by the Madras Government*, p. 335.

[63] *Tamil Nadu*, Feb. 13, 1921 (*Madras NNR, 1921*).

[64] *Desabhaktan*, Aug. 20, 1921 (*Madras NNR, 1921*).

[65] *Nava Sakti*, Jan. 28, 1921 (*Madras NNR, 1921*).

[66] *Hindu* (weekly ed.), Sept. 1, 1921.

whom the country merely connotes space for family activities."[67] M. K. Acharya, another exponent of noncooperation and a friend of Rajagopalachariar's, thought there was an immediate political reason for the Tamil districts' lack of enthusiasm. "Four years ago," he wrote, "we Tamilians marched in the forefront of the national movement. Why have we now lagged behind? The answer is simple. We are engrossed ourselves with minor provincial quarrels . . . The unholy non-Brahman versus Brahmana strife has thoroughly demoralised the vast majority of us."[68]

In the Tamil districts, only a few leaders, including Rajagopalachariar, E. V. Ramaswami Naicker,[69] and S. Ramanathan,[70] were imprisoned for illegal assembly under Section 144 of the Criminal Penal Code. In the Telugu districts Congress activity was much more intense and more successful—even more extremist, in fact, than Gandhi himself advocated. In January and February, 1922, Andhra Congress leaders picketed toddy-shops and on their own initiative started a no-tax campaign. Gandhi, disapproving, wrote to Konda Venkatappayya, a Telugu Neyogi Brahman who was one of the leaders of the Andhra movement, that "it is the bounden duty of all of us to refrain from Mass Civil Disobedience till the masses have undergone the necessary discipline and self-purification. In any other case, mass civil disobedience will not be *civil* but *criminal* and will, therefore, render us unfit to conduct our own affairs as an orderly civilized nation."[71] Despite Gandhi's objections, and the *Hindu*'s warning that the campaign in Andhra would be "fraught with grave perils alike to peace, and tranquility," plans were made to carry forward a survey of

[67] C. Rajagopalachariar, *Rajaji's Jail Life*, entries for Jan. 24 and 29, 1922, pp. 66, 74.

[68] *Hindu* (weekly ed.), Dec. 22, 1921.

[69] *Tamil Nadu*, Dec. 25, 1921 (*Madras NNR, 1921*).

[70] See Rajagopalachariar, *Rajaji's Jail Life*, entry for Feb. 25, 1922, p. 123.

[71] Quoted in the *Hindu*, Jan. 21, 1922.

selected areas in Guntur district with a view to their suitability for a no-tax struggle.[72]

In Madras, the struggles within the Congress administrative system complicated Congress policy when a revised Madras Provincial Congress Committee representing *all* the Tamil districts (its name was later changed to the Tamil Nad Congress Committee) was set up in 1921. Bitter controversy broke out over the elections to the reorganized committee. At a meeting of the M.P.C.C. at the Madras Mahajana Sabha on July 15, 1921, the constitution of the new committee was questioned by Kasturi Ranga Iyengar (the former president) and two other Brahmans, S. Satyamurti and A. Rangaswami Iyengar. Rajagopalachariar was accused among other things of having rigged the election of this committee in hopes of gaining control of it and obtaining thereby for the noncooperation cause a capable instrument with which to fight Gandhi's battles.[73] Rajagopalachariar replied with a letter to the *Hindu* which Ranga Iyengar, the editor, described as an "angry personal disclaimer of responsibility for the muddle which Congress affairs have been reduced to in the Tamil Districts. It may be said almost to be a hysterical outburst least to be expected from so cool, so collected and so calculating a temperament as his."[74] When the local problem was placed before the All-India Congress Committee at Bombay for mediation on August 4, Gandhi pushed through a resolution suggesting that it was "undesirable in the interest of the country to disturb the election."[75] Gandhi's resolution was retained despite the report by C. Vijayaraghavachariar, who had been appointed by the All-India Congress Committee (A.I.C.C.) to make a ruling on the

[72] *Ibid.*, Jan. 21 and 27, 1922.

[73] *Ibid.*, July 16, 1921. There was also discontent over the administration of Congress funds, and particularly over the reconstitution of the Organization Committee. See the *Madras Mail*, July 23, 1921.

[74] *Hindu* (weekly ed.), July 28, 1921.

[75] *Ibid.*, Aug. 6, 1921.

legitimacy of the elections to the reorganized M.P.C.C., that the old Madras Congress Committee's right to reorganize itself without interference had in fact not been honored,[76] and the elections were therefore illegal.

Rajagopalachariar's opponents were thus excluded from the M.P.C.C., and although opposition remained, noncooperation proceeded haltingly in the Tamil districts. On January 13, 1922, antigovernment feeling came to a head as the result of a *hartal* which had been arranged as a mark of disapproval of the official visit of the Prince of Wales to Madras city. As in Bombay, the Madras *hartal* began with nonviolent demonstrations but was later marred by violence. The *Hindu*, which ordinarily decried any form of violence, argued that the *hartal* had been in keeping "with the keen political sense and national awakening which the Madras peoples share."[77] *Justice* disagreed: it denounced the *hartal* as a failure "in spite of all the dubious and devious tactics resorted to by the non-co-operators."[78]

What put an end to all noncooperation, violent or nonviolent, in Madras and elsewhere was the clash on February 4, 1922, between a procession and the police at Chauri Chaura in Gorakhpur, in the United Provinces, as a result of which twenty-two persons were killed. Gandhi immediately cancelled his civil disobedience plans, and at his insistence the A.I.C.C. meeting in Delhi a few weeks later (February 24) adopted the "constructive program" later known as the Bardoli decisions: to discontinue noncooperation, to insist upon the full use of handspun *khaddar*, and to eliminate class antagonism. Gandhi believed that "God spoke clearly through Chauri Chaura": "suspension of mass Civil Disobedience and subsidence of excitement are necessary for future progress, indeed indispensable to prevent further retrogression."[79]

[76] *Hindu* (weekly ed.), Aug. 18, 1921.
[77] *Ibid.*, Jan. 14, 1922.
[78] *Justice*, Jan. 17, 1922 (*Madras NNR, 1922*).
[79] M. K. Gandhi, "The Crisis of Chauri Chaura," in *Young India,*

Rajagopalachariar felt the decision to be a betrayal. Though he admitted "the gravity of the offense of the mob at Gorakhpur," he failed to see "why there should be a call for stopping our struggle for birthrights because of such events."[80] Noncooperation was stopped in the Tamil districts before it had hardly begun. From mid-1919 onward there had been a strong coterie of politicians and journalists who believed that Gandhi was too demanding and unrealistic. And once Gandhi was arrested on March 10, 1922, the interest in noncooperation faded almost completely in the Tamil area.

Council Entry and Spinning

The abandonment of noncooperation in the Tamil districts aggravated the disagreement between Rajagopalachariar and his old enemies, S. Satyamurti and A. Rangaswami Iyengar. Both Satyamurti and Rangaswami Iyengar thought the Congress, released from its boycott, should nominate candidates for the Legislative Council elections of 1923. They argued that Gandhi's change of heart was the ultimate proof that a system of boycotts was unworkable and that an alternative road to *swaraj* should be sought. The enmity on this point between Rajagopalachariar and Satyamurti, both of whom were tough political fighters, was particularly strong, and their attempts to build up a following was one of the characteristic features of Madras Congress politics for a number of years.

A month after Gandhi's arrest the Tamil Nad Congress Committee (T.N.C.C.) met to decide its future course of action. Rajagopalachariar's supporters on the committee were successful in getting a resolution passed to the effect that should normal Congress work be "rendered impossible or extremely difficult" by opposition of a magistrate, a committee should be appointed to

1919–1922, pp. 994, 998. The article appeared originally in *Young India* on February 16, 1922.

[80] Rajagopalachariar, *Rajaji's Jail Life*, entry for Feb. 16, 1922, p. 106.

decide the ways in which to carry on the Congress program—by resort to civil disobedience if necessary. Both Satyamurti and Rangaswami Iyengar were utterly opposed to this attempt to foist noncooperation on a group that had already agreed to honor the Bardoli decisions.[81] Instead of continuing the triple boycott of schools, courts, and Legislative Councils—which had in any event been unproductive—Satyamurti urged Congress to win seats on the councils. Such office would mean access to a "potent means for compelling . . . the advent of Swaraj." The Bardoli decisions had little or no relevance, according to Satyamurti, because they did not hasten "the advent of Swaraj" and because India had only a limited amount of "political energy and enthusiasm" which could ill be spent on endeavors which had no effect.[82]

Satyamurti next proposed to M. R. Jayakar, an important Congress member from Maharashtra, that they unite to form a party within the Congress which would adopt Council entry as a main tenet. By doing so, they would give Indians a chance to express themselves politically, and they would offset the "desperation to which the non-co-operators are being driven in supporting a tottering edifice, because they have not the courage to acknowledge their mistake."[83] But the fight to make Council entry official Congress policy could not be an easy one in Tamil Madras, for as Rangaswami Iyengar explained in a letter to Jayakar in mid-1922, "the trouble in this Province is due to the fact that we all gave up our offices in the Congress Executive Committee immediately after the Calcutta Congress [of 1920], and the Con-

[81] *Hindu*, Apr. 10, 1922.

[82] *Ibid.*, Apr. 29, 1922.

[83] Letter from Satyamurti to Jayakar, dated May 15, 1922, quoted in M. R. Jayakar, *The Story of My Life*, 2 vols. (Bombay, 1958–1959), II, 13–14. Satyamurti first suggested a party that would concentrate on "normal political activities" in March, 1922; see his letter to Jayakar, Mar. 6, 1922, in *ibid.*, I, 593–594. See also *ibid.*, II, 28, for a letter from Satyamurti to Jayakar dated July 1, 1922.

gress caucus is in the hands of the non-co-operators."[84] Even the *Hindu* had temporarily gone over to the side of the noncooperators. It was true, it said on March 20, 1922, that Gandhi's teachings and the noncooperation movement itself tended to promote disagreement with the government, but the exercise of free speech would inevitably have that result, and "creating disaffection is the only way to progress." By the end of the year the *Hindu* was still doubtful of Gandhi's wisdom in suspending the noncooperation movement. On November 18 it said editorially that the "substitution of the constructive [Bardoli] programme for the sterner fight that had been promised had in it something of an anti-climax, much as if a regiment that had been trained and preached up to the pitch of 'victory or death' had suddenly been told that it need not fight after all just yet but might put in useful work growing cabbages." Satyamurti and Rangaswami Iyengar, too, continued to be dissatisfied with the innocuousness and pointlessness of the Bardoli program, and thought that Council entry, with the possibility it held out of destroying the machinery of government through obstruction in the Legislative Councils, was the only route to freedom. Satyamurti was anxious to win support for his proposed Council-entry party at the forthcoming annual Congress session scheduled to meet at Gaya in December, 1922. For if the elections to be held in the latter part of 1923 were not contested, it would be "political suicide for another four years."[85] Ramaswami Iyengar in his Tamil journal *Swadeshimitran* also urged Council entry. The abandonment of the Council boycott did not necessarily imply the abandonment of noncooperation, he observed, and once in office the Congress could revive the noncooperation movement.[86]

Rajagopalachariar had laid his plans carefully, however. Three important non-Brahmans in Congress, members of the M.P.A.,

[84] Rangaswami Iyengar to Jayakar, July 17, 1922, quoted in *ibid.*, II, 30.
[85] Satyamurti to Jayakar, Oct. 15, 1922, in *ibid.*, II, 35.
[86] *Swadeshimitran*, Nov. 3, 1922 (*Madras NNR, 1922*).

declared themselves unwilling to compromise and dissociated themselves from the Council-entry proposal. One of the three, Varadarajulu Naidu, believed that to enter the Councils at this point would be a "retrogression in the policy of Congress" and would merely assist the government in regaining the stature it had lost in 1920 and 1921.[87] E. V. Ramaswami Naicker, like Rajagopalachariar, favored a total boycott—not only of the Provincial Legislative Council elections but also of the elections to municipal, district, and taluq boards.[88] Perhaps the most vehement of all was Tiru. Vi. Kaliyanasundaram Mudaliar, the former editor of the M.P.A. journal *Desabhaktan* and now editor of the *Nava Sakti*. He said that Council entry would be "acknowledging our defeat and going into the enemy's camp" to surrender.[89]

The argument over Council entry cropped up elsewhere in the country, especially in Bengal and Bombay. A report by the All-India Congress Committee in 1922 showed that party members were evenly divided on the question.[90] At the same time, plans were going ahead to form a party within Congress which would contest the 1923 Council elections.[91] At the Gaya session in December, 1922, the conflict between the two sides came to a head rather dramatically, when C. R. Das, a Bengali who had been elected president, resigned after a motion making Council entry a part of the Congress program was rejected by a vote of 1,748 to 890. Motilal Nehru, the general secretary, also resigned, and on January 1, 1923, the two men formed the Swaraj Party.[92] The new party was dedicated to the belief that the best way for India

[87] *Hindu*, Oct. 28, 1922.

[88] *Ibid.*, Nov. 7, 1922.

[89] *Nava Sakti*, Nov. 17, 1922 (*Madras NNR, 1922*).

[90] *Report of the Civil Disobedience Enquiry Committee Appointed by the All-India Congress Committee* (Allahabad, 1922), pp. 70–132.

[91] Rangaswami Iyengar to Jayakar, Aug. 24, 1922, quoted in Jayakar, *The Story of My Life*, II, 31.

[92] Hemendranath Das Gupta, *Deshbandhu Chittaranjan Das* (Delhi, 1960), p. 85. By far the most interesting account of the early days of the

to survive politically and to attain *swaraj* was through Council entry; hence its members easily came to be known as the "Changers," in opposition to those who remained adamant "No-Changers."

The splitting off of the pro-Council element of the party might have appeared to resolve the differences that had manifested themselves within Congress as a result of Gandhi's imprisonment and the Bardoli program, but since in fact the Swaraj Party was prepared to exist within Congress rather than independently of it, the battle between the Changers and the No-Changers was intensified. During the next eight months Rajagopalachariar did all in his power to keep noncooperation, or at least individual civil disobedience, as part of Congress policy. At the same time, the Swaraj Party was able to concentrate energies which previously had been unfocused on the election campaign and on specific issues, and these issues were given greater currency through their espousal by Congress leaders who had stature, both regionally and nationally.

Perhaps the most interesting of the Swaraj leaders was C. R. Das. He had been instrumental in rallying support for Gandhi in Bengal in the crucial decisions of 1920 and had risen quickly in Congress ranks. By the time of the Gaya session, however, he had come to have serious doubts as to the effectiveness and appropriateness of noncooperation, and his misgivings were strengthened by conversations with Jayakar, Motilal Nehru, and Madras leaders such as Satyamurti and Rangaswami Iyengar. In the early months of 1923, in order to gather support for the new Swaraj Party, he began a tour of India. He arrived in Madras for a three-week lecture series in June. Thanks to Rangaswami Iyengar, who had written numerous articles about the party in his *Swadeshimitran* and in a new English weekly of the same name, Das found to his

Swaraj Party can be found in the documents quoted by Jayakar in Vol. II of his *Story of My Life*.

surprise and delight that "the people of Madras had become the strongest supporters of his Council entry programme."[93] In his speeches he repeatedly emphasized the necessity of participating in the new Councils as a way of obstructing the government, but he also urged Hindu–Moslem unity and brought up the Brahman–non-Brahman controversy.[94] The *Hindu* thought his concern with the special problems of south India gratuitous: "The problem," it wrote on June 25, "is not one to be decided in the casual manner affected by Mr. Das and the only result of his interference that we can see is a tendency to introduce the communal canker into Congress politics." Das was also criticized for his friendship with Satyamurti and Rangaswami Iyengar—both Brahmans. The *Justice*, playing upon the name *Deshbandhu* (Friend of the Nation) by which Das was called in Swaraj circles, referred to him as *Brahmanabandhu* (Friend of Brahmans).[95]

It was true that Das was accompanied by Satyamurti and Rangaswami Iyengar throughout his tour of the Tamil districts, and in them both he found able and articulate companions for his cause.[96] Satyamurti admired Das so much that he adopted the Bengali way of dress, and many pictures of him in this period reflect this relationship. Canvassing by Das and by both Satyamurti and Rangaswami Iyengar proved to be very important for the later successes of the Swaraj Party in the elections at the end of 1923.

The process by which the Swaraj Party gained the necessary mandate from Congress to participate in the elections under its

[93] See Rangaswami Iyengar to Jayakar, Feb. 6, 1923, quoted in Jayakar, *The Story of My Life*, II, 80; and Das Gupta, *Chittaranjan Das*, p. 90.

[94] Chittaranjan Das, *The Way to Swaraj*, ed. S. Satyamurti (Madras, 1923).

[95] *Justice*, June 18, 1923 (*Madras NNR, 1923*).

[96] For an interesting statement of Rangaswami Iyengar's part in Das's tour of Madras, see Ār. Kiruṣṇāmāssāriyār, *Arasiyal ñāṉi araṅkasāmi aiyaṅkār* ["Political Stalwart, Rangaswami Aiyangar"] (Madras, n.d.), pp. 97–99.

aegis was a protracted one and reveals the great reluctance of the No-Changers to modify their position on noncooperation. Following the forming of the Swaraj Party, the All-India Congress Committee held three important meetings—at Allahabad in February, at Bombay in May, and at Nagpur in July—in an effort to settle the differences between the Swaraj Party and Rajagopalachariar's noncooperation wing. These attempts failed to win over the No-Changers, and it was not until a Special Congress session at Delhi in mid-September, 1923, that Rajagopalachariar and his group were forced to agree with the majority. The resolution passed by the special session stated:

> While reaffirming its adherence to the principle of Non-co-operation members of this Congress as have no religious or other conscientious objections against entering legislatures are at liberty to stand as candidates and to exercise the right of voting at the forthcoming elections and this Congress therefore suspends all propaganda against entering Councils. The Congress at the same time calls upon all Congressmen to redouble their efforts to carry out the constructive programme of their leader Mahatma Gandhi and by united endeavour to achieve Swaraj at the earliest possible moment.[97]

The passage of this resolution effectively ended the dispute that had gone on since the Calcutta Congress session of 1920 when noncooperation was officially adopted as part of Congress policy. The Swaraj Party, free to contest Council elections, went ahead with its canvassing, and in the elections in Madras a few months later won eleven seats. This was less of a victory than had been expected, but it was nonetheless an important beginning for a party which was to challenge the supremacy of the Justice Party.

The Congress No-Changers meanwhile continued to support the constructive program, the most conspicuous element of which was the spinning of *khaddar* or homemade cloth. Soon after the

[97] *Hindu*, Sept. 18, 1923.

Cocanada Congress session in December, 1923, at which the final details were agreed upon whereby the Changers and No-Changers could work together,[98] Rajagopalachariar announced that "1924 must be a khaddar year."[99] K. Santhanam, a Brahman friend of Rajagopalachariar's, was put in charge of *khaddar* production and distribution in the Tamil districts. To his dismay, Santhanam found that there was little demand for *khaddar* in the areas under his supervision. "While many provinces are complaining that production of Khaddar has not been keeping pace with the demand," he said, "there is not a single centre here which is not complaining that the demand is not keeping pace with the supply."[100]

The unwillingness of the Tamilians to buy homespun cloth was only one of a number of difficulties that encumbered the *khaddar* workers in Madras. For example, in the city of Madras, which was the home of both the Tamil Nad and the Andhra Provincial Congress Committees, a squabble arose between Telugus and Tamils in the Congress, each group complaining of "poaching" by the other. S. Srinivasa Iyengar, who had resigned his seat in the Madras Legislative Council in 1921 as a protest against the government's policy toward noncooperators, was one of the organizers of the *khaddar* program in Madras city. "No patriotism worth the name," he said, "could sanction such an idiotic thing as setting up Andhra [Khaddar] Sabhas in various wards of the City as rivals to the Tamil [Khaddar] Sabhas."[101] The *khaddar* program was for some years one of the important ways of spreading Gandhi's ideas on the simplicity and purity of manual labor, but it never found much response in Tamil Nad. There was even a hint of corruption in the program: on several occasions persons who had received money from Santhanam's Khaddar Board in the Tamil areas were accused of using the money

98 Jayakar, *The Story of My Life*, II, 178.
99 *Hindu* (weekly ed.), Jan. 10, 1924.
100 *Ibid.*, Jan. 25, 1924.
101 *Ibid.*, Feb. 25, 1924.

for private purposes rather than turning it to the production of homespun cloth.

From the very outset, of course, Gandhi's program of non-cooperation had fared badly in south India, particularly in the Tamil areas. By 1924 the fortunes of the No-Changer wing of the Congress in Madras had reached their nadir. Rajagopalachariar was opposed at every turn by the Swaraj Party and other splinter groups within the Congress organization in Tamil Nad. He was frequently criticized by the *Hindu*, the most influential English daily in south India. Perhaps most importantly, he and the non-cooperators in south India had to contend with the Justice Party, which was always ready to seize any advantage of the new situation presented by the Reforms in opposition to Gandhi. These factors all tended to disperse the focus of political activity in Madras presidency and to diminish and sometimes eliminate the possibility for any united action within Congress.

Provincial Contributions

In one important matter the lines of division between Congress and the Justice Party were transcended in the years 1920–1925. This was the matter of Madras' contribution to the finances of the central government, and it was one on which the two sides united to form what can be considered to be Madras provincial opinion.

Since the start of the twentieth century, the Madras government and Madras politicians had been protesting to the central government about the disproportionately high contribution that Madras had to make to the central government's finances.[102] When the India Bill came before the House of Commons in June, 1919, Sir John Rees used the opportunity to say, "I am sorry . . .

[102] See MRO, Public, Ordinary Series, Letter 1586, Dec. 20, 1913, Proceedings of the Madras Provincial Conference held in Trichinopoly, May 5–7, 1913; MRO, Public, Ordinary Series, Letter 1044, Aug. 25, 1914, Proceedings of the First District Conference held at Coimbatore, June 20–21, 1914.

that Madras continues to be a sort of milch cow . . . It does not willingly supply all these delicacies to the whole of India."[103] Later in the year when Sir Alexander Cardew appeared before the Joint Select Committee, Rees asked him whether he thought Madras was treated fairly in financial matters. Cardew replied that the financial proposals of the Montagu–Chelmsford Reforms would do great harm to Madras. "It is an iniquitous proposal to saddle Madras with such a large share."[104]

Cardew was referring to the proposed amount to be levied by the central government of India on Madras in order to balance the imperial deficit. In May, 1920, when the *Report* of Lord Meston's Financial Relations Commission was published, it was discovered that Madras was to pay 35.5 percent of the Government of India's imperial deficit, or 348 lakhs of rupees (Rs. 34,800,000), whereas Bengal (which, because of a permanent land settlement, had a land revenue that could not be enhanced) was to pay only 6.5 percent, or 63 lakhs (Rs. 6,300,000).[105] The Madras Chamber of Commerce and other commercial groups in Madras quickly made plain their objections to the proposed levy. A great many meetings were held that year to condemn the so-called Meston Financial Award,[106] and the Legislative Council made numerous official protests to the central government. In 1921, two months

[103] Great Britain, 5 *Parliamentary Debates* (Commons), CXVI (1919), 2379.

[104] Joint Select Committee, *Evidence*, Q. 5963, p. 333.

[105] Great Britain, Parliamentary Papers, Vol. XIV (*Reports from Commissioners, Inspectors, etc.*, Vol. VI), Cmd. 724, 1920, "Report of the Committee Appointed by the Secretary of State for India to Advise on the Question of the Financial Relations between the Central and Provincial Governments in India," *passim*.

[106] See the proceedings of the non-Brahman meeting under the chairmanship of K. V. Reddi Naidu, on May 22, 1921, where a resolution was passed demanding that Madras presidency be freed from "any contribution whatever considering its poverty, past injustice, previous economy, and its heavy contribution, for generations, for the benefit of other provinces and the Government of India." *Madras Mail*, May 24, 1920.

after the Montagu–Chelmsford Councils came into operation, a motion was passed unanimously in the Madras Legislative Council condemning the heavy imposition. K. V. Reddi Naidu, the Minister of Development, who was to become the great protagonist of Madras' rights in this matter, protested that Bengal had always been treated as the "prodigal son" for whom Madras, "the fatted cow," was slaughtered.[107]

Meston's financial settlement between the provinces and the central government was one of the many mechanisms necessitated by the British decision to establish a federal system of government in India as recommended by the Decentralization Commission *Report* of 1914. What precipitated this crisis between Madras and the Center was the economic situation in India as a whole. The World War had interrupted a large series of public and civil works projects, and postwar attempts to resume them came to naught. Even with military expenditure reduced, the central government's finances in 1922 still showed a deficit of Rs. 280,000,000. Poor monsoons and a trade depression added to the difficulties throughout India. Bengal, pleading an inability to meet its provincial expenses, asked the central government to relieve it of its contribution to the national treasury, and the request was granted.[108]

Politicians in Madras felt they were being exploited and pressed for the same treatment accorded to Bengal. A resolution to that effect was offered in the Madras Legislative Council in October, 1921, by T. A. Ramalingam Chetti (who had left the Justice Party in May). The resolution showed a unity of all shades of political opinion, as Sir James Simpson, representing the Madras Chamber of Commerce, noted in his speech supporting the resolution:

[107] *MLCP*, I B (Apr. 1, 1921), 1548.

[108] For the Bengal case, see John H. Broomfield, "Politics and the Bengal Legislative Council, 1912–26," pp. 274–275.

> Fortunately, Sir, in this House, if we take ourselves as a family—we are not altogether an unhappy family although we may have our family discords and disagreements as unfortunately all families have—but on this question we are a united family. There are no Brahmans or non-Brahmans (laughter and cheers), moderates or extremists, Adi-Dravidas or caste Hindus (laughter). We are all Madras men, standing for Madras interest and it is in this spirit that I ask the House to pass this resolution (cheers).[109]

Reddi Naidu, supporting the resolution, criticized the ineffective way in which the Madras representatives in the Legislative Assembly in Delhi had sought a reconsideration of the Madras case. Venkatapati Raju, Reddi Naidu said, had been "brushed aside with the remark that he might come in his own turn or that provincial and parochial patriotism should not be obtruded into the august assembly which legislates for the whole continent of India," yet clearly he felt the provinces were not being treated with equality. A. R. Knapp, the Home Member of the Madras Executive Council, congratulated the members on the great interest and understanding that they brought to the discussion, and he assured the House that the Madras government had no intention of letting the "matter go by default (hear, hear)."[110] The resolution was passed unanimously.

Resentment over the injustice was not confined to the Legislative Council (a Council which Congress had boycotted), as can be gathered from editorials in the *Hindu* and the *Mail* in late 1922 at the time of the second major Council debate on the subject. The *Hindu* (Sept. 14 and 15) made the point that unless Madras presidency got immediate relief from its financial burdens, further progress would be impossible. The *Mail* was even more indignant. In an editorial (Dec. 11) entitled "Too Far Away" it complained bitterly that the great distance that lay

[109] *MLCP*, III (Oct. 15, 1921), 1238.
[110] *Ibid.*, pp. 1249, 1243.

between the center of government and Madras made it impossible for the central government to know Madras' "conditions, to understand the feelings of its peoples. Since they refuse to come to Madras, and Madras cannot go to Simla, only one thing remains possible. Madras should fight persistently and continuously for complete autonomy." The *Mail* was echoing the feelings expressed earlier by Lord Wenlock, and by the biographers of Lords Carmichael and Pentland, that Madras was too remote and its special administration and social configuration and needs too unusual ever to be understood by the central government whether it was in Calcutta, Delhi, or Simla. What is relevant is the fact that although this resentment against the central government was strong in Bengal and Bombay, it was most violent in Madras.[111] In Madras the resentment was further exacerbated by the suspicion that south India, especially the Tamil south, was being exploited and underrated by the north, and treated in general as a "poor cousin."[112] It is perhaps irrelevant whether Madras was right or wrong in these beliefs, but it is significant that the beliefs were later utilized by politicians and social reformers who sought more autonomy for the Tamil area.

In March, 1925, the question of Madras' contributions to the Center culminated in a vigorous Council debate which went beyond the specific matter of how much Madras was going to give and strayed into a discussion of the salt tax. The Legislative As-

[111] For Bengal, see Broomfield, "Politics and the Bengal Legislative Council," p. 276, and the account of Lord Casey (Governor of Bengal, 1944–1946) in his *Personal Experience, 1939–1946* (London, 1962), pp. 182–183. For Bombay, see the comments of Edward Cadogan, a member of the Simon Commission, in his *The India We Saw* (London, 1933), p. 22; also the complaints of Motilal Nehru in respect to U.P.'s contributions to the central government's finances, as given in B. R. Nanda, *The Nehrus: Motilal and Jawaharlal* (London, 1962), p. 110. See also, for Madras, Lord Reading to Montagu, quoted in Marquess of Reading, *Rufus Isaacs, First Marquess of Reading, 1914–1935* (London, 1945), II, 211.

[112] *Madras Mail*, Apr. 26, 1924, and Nov. 11, 1926.

sembly in Delhi had recently reduced the excise on salt from Rs. 1=4=0 to Rs. 1=0=0 per maund (80 lbs.). Since salt was a "transferred" subject, the lower excise meant that Madras would in the future be getting lower revenues from the excise department—and salt taxes had formerly accounted for a considerable portion of Madras excise revenues.

This debate, which reflected many of the problems implicit in a federal system of government, was made more interesting because, owing to the 1923 elections, it included members of the Swaraj Party, who, though cooperators, were dedicated to all-India politics.[113] The earlier solidarity of the Council was shattered. The resolution for adjournment was introduced by Sir James Simpson, the Chamber of Commerce representative, in order to consider the "serious effect" that the reduction of the salt excise would probably have on Madras finances. Simpson urged that a message be sent to the Madras representatives in the Legislative Assembly in Delhi asking them to vote for a reduction of the provincial contribution rather than for the reduction of the salt excise. S. Satyamurti, who was the chief representative of the Swaraj Party on the Council, used his oratorical powers to oppose Simpson's suggestion: "I would like to have both. But if reduction of taxation is to be linked up with the reduction of provincial contributions, as suggested by my hon. Friend . . . then I part company with him. To me it seems that the most paramount need to-day of our people is the gradual and continual reduction of taxation." Swaraj members in the House, who unlike their counterparts in Bengal were never able to obstruct the business of the Madras Council in the period 1923–1926, were in a difficult position. On the one hand, they were determined to maintain an all-India perspective, yet they realized that the feeling in their own constituencies and that of the educated in the presidency generally was keenly against the size of the Madras provincial contribution. C. V.

[113] See *MLCP*, XXIII (Mar. 19, 1925), 335–342.

S. Narasimha Raju wriggled out of this dilemma by pointing out that "There are questions of national importance and we cannot allow interprovincial jealousies to play any part in the minds of our representatives [in Delhi] when national questions are to be tackled."

K. V. Reddi Naidu (who had been replaced as Minister of Development in 1923 by T. N. Sivagnanam Pillai but still sat on the Council) claimed that this appeal to the "national" interest was fraudulent: "We are told that parochial patriotism should give way to national patriotism. I wonder what became of this national patriotism in the Assembly when this question of contributions arose there. Bombay and Bengal combined and defeated the demand made by this Government and by the people of this province *in getting a reduction. If they could afford to be patriotic* parochially and not nationally when our needs came in, is it right that our representatives should go this way now?" India's politicial leaders were, he said, in a transitional stage where loyalties tended to be confused. "We are now in the indefinite state of the process of making a nation and beginning to undertake responsible government and when these difficulties have to be faced what are we to do as prudent men? Are we to sacrifice our province and report to what is called national patriotism? Patriotism is a very good thing but the cant of patriotism is worse than any patriotism. Patriotism consists in providing for yourself and for your homes."[114]

Reddi Naidu had earlier, of course, strongly supported the Montagu–Chelmsford Reforms. Now, led on by provincial loyalties, he was attacking the dyarchic system, at least in so far as it gave the Legislative Council the power to pass on resolutions on financial grievances but not to legislate on them. He realized, as he made clear later, that it was difficult to make dyarchy a success without adequate finances for and control over the trans-

[114] *Ibid.*, pp. 341–342.

ferred departments, but until the Legislature possessed full power "over the Finance Minister and full power of administration of the funds" responsible government was a "myth and a mirage."[115] Madras had worked the Reforms better than any other province; but Reddi Naidu considered that the time had come to implement provincial autonomy, and he felt certain that "the voice of this House and of this province must carry greater weight with the authorities than that of other places."[116] Interestingly enough, a year previously Lord Willingdon, the Governor, had voiced the same sentiments in a letter to Lord Reading, the Viceroy, and to Lord Peel, the Secretary of State for India, urging that, because of its singular success in working the Reforms, Madras should be given full responsible government.[117] In Reddi Naidu's opinion, it was precisely because the Justice ministers had worked the Reforms in the spirit in which they had been conceived that Madras was taxed so heavily by the central government. The Justice Party, he said, "while admitting that dyarchy was a failure and could not be worked . . . yet made the reforms a success, as much success as was possible under the peculiar conditions, because we got over dyarchy by ignoring it altogether. On hundreds of questions, and times without number, we, Ministers and Executive Councillors, met and neither did the reserved half nor the transferred half make any difference of questions that arose in the two departments."[118]

Unlike the rest of India, with the possible exception of the Punjab, Madras had made the Reforms work—and it had done so because the Justice Party was willing to cooperate with the British bureaucracy. The reasons for cooperating were selfish enough, since the party hoped to better the political and administrative position of the non-Brahmans and at the same time keep the

[115] *MLCP*, XIX (Aug. 18, 1924), 129.
[116] *Ibid.*, p. 128.
[117] Marquess of Reading, *Rufus Isaacs*, II, 219.
[118] *MLCP*, XIX (Aug. 18, 1924), 128.

Brahmans from monopolizing political power in south India. To many Justice members, the noncooperation movement itself, and particularly Gandhi's role in it, was a Brahmanical movement which was designed to bring anarchy and chaos and to shake the British hegemony in India. Because the Justice Party provided the alternative of Council entry in order to gain a political voice, many Congress members in the Tamil districts who distrusted Gandhi's methods as being too idealistic sought to undermine the work of the noncooperators in the Tamil districts, and after the Chauri Chaura incident even the token response in these districts evaporated. But at the same time the increasing power of the Justice Party in the Madras Legislative Council and the change in direction after the death of Dr. Nair combined to give the party a more and more conservative outlook, which eventually ignored the untouchables altogether. Even the party organization, which was strong at the time of the 1920 elections, began to weaken. Thus participation in the Reforms had, for the Justice Party, resulted in a narrower social and political orientation, and, for the Congress, had caused ever more serious party divisions.

Chapter 7

NON-BRAHMAN LEGISLATION AND PROVINCIAL POLITICS

After the Justice Party had come to power as a result of the 1920 elections, it proceeded to strengthen its position in the public life of south India by bringing before the Legislative Council in Madras a series of resolutions designed to give non-Brahmans in the presidency a greater proportion of government jobs. These resolutions and the subsequent Government Orders fostered great enmity between the non-Brahmans and those whom they sought to displace—the Tamil Brahmans—but the Justice Party pursued its demands doggedly, for it realized that the implementation of Government Orders to redistribute government appointments in favor of non-Brahmans would fulfill some of the party's first-articulated ideals—administrative power, social position, and economic security.

But the more the Justice Party pressed its demands and the more successful it seemed to be, the more it lost the support of individuals and groups who had assisted it in its original campaign to achieve recognition for non-Brahmans as a backward group which needed official support in order to survive in the political battles implied by the Montagu–Chelmsford Reforms. With power, the Justice Party gradually limited its objectives and closed its ranks, pursuing the needs of non-Brahman caste Hindus to the exclusion of other groups such as the untouchables and the Muslims. Tension between the Tamils and the Telugus within the Justice Party also became apparent soon after the party came into office, and these differences were never entirely resolved.

Non-Brahmans in Government Service

One of the main reasons for the Justice Party's decision to cooperate with the government and to contest the elections to the new reformed councils was that it saw in this method an opportunity to enhance the economic and public position of non-Brahmans. By far the most important means by which the Justice Party sought to implement this ambition was through pressure on the government in Madras to issue an executive order that would assure the non-Brahmans a more prominent place in the government services. The promulgation of what came to be known as the Second Communal Government Order in 1922 capped the long drive of the Justice Party for a greater distribution of government posts among non-Brahmans. This G. O. instructed collectors and other officials with the power of appointment to government posts to give priority in their recruitment policy to non-Brahmans and other so-called "backward" communities. But the executive decree establishing a balance between the different caste groups in the presidency was only in part a result of Justice Party pressure within the Council; it was also a natural evolution of the government's policy during the half-century preceding the Montagu–Chelmsford Reforms. The history of the growth of government antipathy toward Brahmans in politics and in the administration helps to explain why the Madras government was finally willing to give in to Justice Party pressure within the Council.

As a result of a long series of conflicts in the early nineteenth century between district officers and subordinate staff in areas where Brahmans, by nepotism, had contrived to usurp much of the direction of the administration of a district,[1] the Board of Revenue in Madras promulgated in 1851 a standing order—pop-

[1] For one case study of how the revenues and administrative functions of one district in the Northern Circars was taken over by Brahmans see Robert E. Frykenberg, *Guntur District, 1788–1848: A History of Local Influence and Central Authority in South India.*

ularly known as Standing Order No. 128, Clause 2—which laid down the means whereby the number of Brahmans in the revenue service of the government could be controlled. It was stated in the order that the Collector should always divide the "principle appointments in each district among the several castes," and that a proportion of the *tahsildars* in each district should belong to castes *other than* Brahman. Also, it was made mandatory (a standing rule) that the "two chief revenue servants in the Collector's office (the *huzur sharistadar* and the English head clerk) should be of different castes."[2] An inquiry into staffing three years later by the Board of Revenue yielded the information that the revenue officials of Nellore district included forty-nine relatives and "connections" of G. Venkataramanayya, a Telugu Neyogi Brahman, despite the promulgation of the Standing Order No. 128. In the Board's minutes for March, 1854, the case was noted with considerable forcefulness. "Whatever may be the aptitude of the members of this family for public service and whatever may be the family differences and disputes between themselves, it is evident that the head of the office—the European officer—must be almost powerless to detect and punish fraud and wrong, on the part of members of this family—and as a necessary consequence, he will be powerless to protect the people against extortions or oppressions of the family."[3] Large numbers of Brahmans in the revenue and other government services, particularly when they were connected by family, were considered deleterious to the public good, since it meant that the responsibility for the well-being of any given district lay not with the district officer but with his subordinate staff.

Nevertheless, attempts to implement the Standing Order were largely unsuccessful until nearly the end of the century. At last, in the 1890's, in an effort to effect not only the Standing Order

[2] MRO, Revenue, Miscellaneous Series, G.O. 3722, Nov. 21, 1918.
[3] Quoted in *ibid*.

but also the recommendations of the Public Services Commission Report of 1886, the Madras government decided to fill appointments in the Provincial Civil Service—a service in status and responsibility halfway between the Indian Civil Service and the Subordinate Service—by open competition. In 1893 the principle of open competition was extended to the recruitment of Deputy Collectors. But the system did nothing to break the Brahman monopoly: in the years 1893–1895 all except one of the successful candidates were Brahmans, owing, as the Madras Chief Secretary put it, to "the extraordinary ability displayed by this class of the community in passing examinations."[4] The Board of Revenue still considered, as it had in 1854, that a disproportionate number of Brahmans in the service hampered good administration. In addition, it also left no "opportunities available to Government, in justice to the other classes of the community, for promotion from the Subordinate Service of deserving officers of that class."[5] Between 1896 and 1911, therefore, when renewed attempts were made to prevent Brahmans from monopolizing the Provincial Civil Service, the Board of Revenue abandoned its total reliance upon competitive examinations and selected personnel partly with a view toward efficiency but also with a desire for social justice.[6] It was at this time that a remarkable series of pamphlets was issued by a pseudonymous author under the name "Fair Play," on the relations between the non-Brahmans and the public services in Madras. "Fair Play" was anxious to establish a non-Brahman political organization and a journal to propagate its views, but he also argued that the public services should be "secured to the

[4] MRO, Public, Ordinary Series, Letter 273, Feb. 22, 1896: Letter from J. F. Price, Chief Secretary of the Government of Madras, to the Government of India, Home Department.

[5] *Ibid.*

[6] MRO, Public, Ordinary Series, G.O. 202, Feb. 12, 1913: Letter from Murray Hammick, Acting Chief Secretary to the Government of India, Home Department, dated July 22, 1904.

men from among the millions of the non-Brahmin subjects who form the bulk, if not the whole, of the population . . . [of the presidency]." The "just share" of the services that "Fair Play" thought was due the non-Brahmans corresponded to the proportion of non-Brahmans in the presidency.[7] "The 97 per cent. of the non-Brahmin population must have 97 per cent. of appointments in the public services reserved for them."[8]

But still the Brahmans continued to dominate—despite the concerted efforts of the Madras government for nearly a half-century to limit their number, along with a policy, beginning in 1904, of deliberately including non-Brahmans among government servants; and despite, also, the publicizing of the issue by pamphleteers like "Fair Play." In 1912, when it was announced that the second Public Services Commission was about to investigate the recruitment, pay, pensions, and promotion opportunities in government services, it was discovered upon inquiry that there was still a marked preponderance of Brahmans in many departments.[9] Again, orders were issued urging the collectors and others who made government appointments to comply with the Board's Standing Order No. 128.

When the Public Services Commission visited Madras early in 1913, the matter began to take on a political tone. A great many witnesses, government and otherwise, were examined, and the evidence of each day's hearings was published in the daily press. This publication of the evidence aroused a general interest in the government's policy and stimulated demands for change by the non-Brahmans. Of all the evidence given before the Commissioners at Madras that of Alexander Cardew, the Chief Secretary

[7] Fair Play (pseud.), *The Non-Brahmin Races and the Indian Public Service*, pp. 7–8.

[8] Fair Play (pseud.), *The Ways and Means for the Amelioration of the Non-Brahmin Races*, p. 23.

[9] MRO, Public, Ordinary Series, G.O. 1561, Dec. 19, 1912; MRO, Home (Miscellaneous), Ordinary Series, Oct. 23, 1917.

of the Madras government, was the most provocative. In his evidence, Cardew emphasized his belief that it was impossible to employ the competitive system of recruitment to government service in southern India because of "the astonishing intellectual superiority of a small, rigidly exclusive caste, the Brahman." And he gave figures: "Out of a population of 41½ millions, the number of Brahmans (all ages and sexes) is 1⅓ million, or about 3 per cent., while out of the total number of Graduates of the University [of Madras], 8,821 or 72 per cent. are Brahmans. In the competitive examinations for the Provincial Civil Service which were held between 1892 and 1904, out of 16 successful candidates, 15 were Brahmans and only one was a non-Brahman, giving a ratio of 94 per cent. of Brahman success." Competitive examinations for government posts in the Provincial Service would result, he contended, in "the exclusion from office of large and important sections of the population and in virtual monopoly of success by Brahmans." Cardew concluded that "The Brahman has maintained his lead for 30 years and shows no signs of losing it, and inasmuch as his intellectual superiority is a racial characteristic, it is unlikely that it will be shaken except after an indefinite lapse of time."[10]

Cardew's evidence supporting the claims of the non-Brahmans and urging a more careful control over the number of Brahmans entering the government services was supplemented by the evidence of a large number of non-Brahmans, including Dr. T. M. Nair and P. Tyagaraja Chetti, and others who condemned the great Brahman preponderance in the Provincial Civil Service.[11]

[10] Great Britain, Parliamentary Papers, Vol. XXI (*Reports from Commissioners, Inspectors, etc.*, Vol. XI), Cd. 7293, 1914, "Appendices to the Report of the Royal Commission appointed to inquire into the Public Services in India, Vol. II: Evidence taken in Madras," Answer to Qs. 1184 and 1186.

[11] Cardew pointed out that of 140 deputy collectors in service in 1912, 77 were Brahmans and 30 were non-Brahman Hindus; whereas of the 18

But the most outspoken of these non-Brahman witnesses, both of whom were later to become members of the Justice Party, were A. Kumaraswami Tampoe, an I.C.S. officer, and T. Balaji Rao Nayudu. The former, an Indian Christian from Ceylon whose forebears had been Tamil Vellalas, maintained that the Brahmans were at the head of a social system that was undemocratic and could therefore not develop democratic attitudes themselves.[12] Tampoe did admit, on being pressed by Gokhale (a Maharashtrian Chitpavan Brahman), who was a member of the Commission, that this difficulty could be corrected by the values that Western education engendered, but he urged that non-Brahmans be represented more strongly in the services.[13] Balaji Rao Nayudu, a Revenue Divisional Officer with the Madras government, was even more outspoken in his opinion that non-Brahmans should have proportional representation in government service, even if it meant a temporary lowering of educational qualifications.[14]

As all this evidence appeared daily in the press, it was duly noted and its import clearly understood. The Justice Party referred to Sir Alexander Cardew's evidence in its 1916 Manifesto, citing it as conclusive proof of the Brahman's grip on the administrative services. Indeed, Nair and Tyagaraja Chetti adopted as part of party policy Cardew's recommendations that two separate competitive examinations be held—one for half the posts, to

sub-judges, 15 were Brahmans and 3 were non-Brahman Hindus. Finally, in the category of district munsif, the other major government employment which carried with it both prestige and monetary rewards, of the 128 posts, Brahmans held 93 while non-Brahman Hindus held only 25. *Ibid.*, Answer to Q. 1297.

[12] *Ibid.*, Answer to Qs. 6191 and 6192.

[13] *Ibid.*, Answer to Qs. 6298 and 6163.

[14] *Ibid.*, Answer to Q. 2325. Balaji Rao Nayudu denied that the non-Brahmans wanted government positions because of what Ramsay Macdonald called the "spoils system" (*ibid.*, Answer to Q. 2322), but he insisted that since most of the *ryots* (peasants) were Sudras or non-Brahmans, they would welcome a Sudra government officer. *Ibid.*, Answer to Q. 2285.

be open to all persons including Brahmans, and another for the remaining posts, to be open only to non-Brahmans.[15]

The assumption contained in the Non-Brahmin Manifesto that Cardew's evidence to the Public Services Commission revealed the sympathy of the Madras government with the non-Brahman case was not without foundation.[16] There is considerable evidence to suggest that Lord Pentland himself, as indicated by his discussions with Montagu in December, 1917, feared that the Brahmans might gain control not only of the administration of the presidency but also of its politics, with all the agitation and inconvenience for the British bureaucracy that this would imply.[17] Certainly in the year 1912–1919, the Government of Madras—and particularly Cardew and Pentland—proved unusually responsive to non-Brahman claims and in the discussions with the Southborough Committee pressed for communal representation for non-Brahmans under the Reforms. But Cardew's and Pentland's belief in government by a bureaucracy made them reluctant to allow the non-Brahmans to dictate policy, by whatever means, on non-Brahman representation in the services.

An unwillingness to be dictated to by public pressure did not protect the Madras government, however, from an increasing number of demands from non-Brahman caste Hindus as well as other groups claiming backward status and special consideration in the distribution of government appointments. The Indian Christians, along with the south Indian Muslims and the un-

[15] See *ibid.*, Answer to Q. 1186; also MRO, Public, Ordinary Series, G.O. 202, Feb. 12, 1913.

[16] Even in 1910, an advertisement by the Collectors of Bellary and Madras for non-Brahman graduates to fill some vacancies provoked strong response: an editorial on June 1, 1910, in the newspaper *Sadhvi* entitled "Anti-Brahmin Spirit" said, "To patronise caste at the cost of efficiency and honesty is a policy of doubtful utility. It is also a courageous one. We do not think that it is a policy which a Christian Collector can inaugurate." *Madras NNR, 1910.*

[17] MRO, Home (Educational), Ordinary Series, G.O. 969, Oct. 13, 1916.

touchables, provoked a full-scale inquiry into the relationship between their educational standing and relative position in government employment.[18] Thus the pressure grew, and when the Non-Brahmin Manifesto appeared in 1916 it was eagerly read by those who knew English, and then, after translation, by Tamil- and Telugu-readers as well.

After the new Justice Party started airing its claims and irritations, the Government of Madras began to make even more sustained efforts to assist the non-Brahmans. Lord Pentland revised the number and scope of the Special Tests so as to remove many of the disabilities that were considered unfair handicaps in the way of those "educationally backward classes" that sought to rise higher in the service.[19] However, the most interesting and best documented attempt by a government official to assist non-Brahmans in their rise to administrative power was that of V. Venugopal Chetti, a Telugu Beri Chetti, a Justice Party member, who had been in the I.C.S. since 1890. At a Collectors' conference at Ootacamund in August, 1917, he made a vigorous stand in favor of practical and strong measures to better the condition of the non-Brahmans in the presidency. Some of his arguments reflected Justice Party policy, as promulgated by Justice leaders in Madras

[18] See the complete assessment of Indian Christian representation in all the services in MRO, Public, Ordinary Series, G.O. 1129, Sept. 8, 1913. This G.O. also contains the memorial of the Anjuman-i-Mufid-i-Ahle-i-Islam, the oldest Muslim Association in the presidency. For the untouchables, see MRO, Public, Ordinary Series, G.O. 1494, Nov. 20, 1919.

[19] MRO, Home (Educational), Ordinary Series, G.O. 969, Oct. 13, 1916. In 1917 and 1918 further orders were passed eliminating or cutting down these "disabling" tests in an attempt to assist the non-Brahmans. Many of the government's actions in this connection were prompted by letters of protest in *Justice* about these tests. See MRO, Home (Educational), Ordinary Series, G.O. 1492, Nov. 26, 1917; G.O. 521, Apr. 23, 1918; G.O. 1248, Sept. 18, 1918; and MRO, Home (Judicial), Ordinary Series, G.O. 1337, June 5, 1918, and G.O. 2260, Oct. 5, 1918. In 1916 it was decided that the Secondary School Leaving Certificate (equivalent to a high school diploma) would satisfy the qualifications of any job with a salary of Rs. 20 a month.

and in London before the Joint Select Committee. For example, he made the point that since the major portion of the population—"the bulk of the tax-payers and a considerable proportion of the landed classes"—were non-Brahman Hindus the existence of a large majority of Brahmans in all the government offices was "inequitable," and the source of much discontent. It was also true that the non-Brahman community was "backward" and that it had not "yet adapted itself to the changing conditions of the country." He urged the government to come to the non-Brahmans' rescue.[20]

Since the non-Brahman Hindus were unequal to the qualifications that the government set for employment, Venugopal Chetti suggested that the imbalance between the caste groups should be remedied by reserving for the non-Brahmans a fixed proportion—he suggested one-third—of the clerical staff and of the students selected for the Engineering, Forest, and Teaching colleges. Their selection should be made on the basis of a relaxation of the examination qualifications.[21] Acting on Venugopal Chetti's proposal, the conference decided to set up a special committee and requested information about caste representation in the government service from the Secretariat. The statistics of the numbers of non-Brahmans and Brahmans in the government professional training schools subsequently provided by the Secretariat seemed to prove beyond any doubt the need for some sort of relaxation of qualifications in favor of the non-Brahmans, but when the committee proposed this to the Secretariat, the Secretariat refused to take any action.[22]

The fate of Venugopal Chetti's proposals is illustrative of what

[20] MRO, Home (Miscellaneous), Ordinary Series, G.O. 1123, Oct. 23, 1917. An indication of the Justice Party's feelings toward Venugopal Chetti can be found in the long obituary notice in *Justice*, Dec. 6, 1928.

[21] MRO, Home (Miscellaneous), Ordinary Series, G.O. 1123, Oct. 23, 1917.

[22] *Ibid.*

happened on a number of occasions from then on, for five more years, when non-Brahmans demanded special treatment in the matter of government appointments. On each occasion there was pressure from a non-Brahman group or individual, whose demands were supported by members of the British bureaucracy anxious to cut through the hold of the Brahmans on the administrative system and the politics in the presidency. These men, persons such as Sir Alexander Cardew and Sir Charles Todhunter, were always opposed by one or two members of the Madras Executive Council (in the 1920's by A. R. Knapp and R. A. Graham) who were unwilling to sacrifice the efficiency of the services in order to satisfy non-Brahman caste Hindu aspirations.

The Madras government could do nothing to prevent discussions on the subject from arising in the Madras Legislative Council, however. In July, 1920, a dispute broke out over the matter of Madras government patronage to an institution in Madras city called the Brahman Widows' Home. M. C. Rajah, an untouchable, objected that similar treatment was not granted to widows of other caste groups and that the support of this home out of government funds was a flagrant example of partiality to Brahmans. He placed before the house a resolution to suspend the allocation of government funds for the home, but he was unable to force the issue and finally withdrew the resolution.[23] In all, there were five occasions between 1917 and 1920 when the Madras government had to contend with criticisms in Council—four times from non-Brahmans and once from a Brahman. But in this period the government refused to be dictated to publicly, although it sought to increase its efforts to solve the problems administratively. A question by a Muslim Justice member asking for information on the number of Brahmans, non-Brahmans, Muslims, and others employed by the Government of Madras and for information concerning future government policy on

[23] *MLCP*, XLVIII (July 15, 1920), 119, 127.

Brahmans in government service brought the terse reply, "The subject is under the close attention of Government."[24] When the same member pressed the point further a few months later, asking for figures of superintendents and clerks in the Secretariat according to Brahman, non-Brahman, Muslim, and Indian Christian categories, he received a much fuller reply, including tables showing the Brahman majorities in the Secretariat in Madras city.[25] These tables were, indeed, the beginning of a long series of disclosures by the government which added to non-Brahman confidence and irritation. But the next year, 1919, when M. C. Rajah and P. Tyagaraja Chetti asked whether or not the government proposed to pass orders for the adequate representation of all classes in the lower grades of the public services, both questions were disallowed on the grounds that they were not in the public interest.[26] On the single occasion (in 1918) when the anti-Brahman bias of the Board of Revenue's Standing Rule No. 128 was attacked by a Brahman (V. K. Ramanuja Achariar), Cardew, who was then on the Executive Council, found the question preposterous and unworthy of serious attention. When it came time for Ramanuja Achariar to put the question in Council, he failed to show up, and the resolution was never moved.[27]

All the while, however, the Madras government was privately getting ready to implement, on a wide scale, the suggestions made by non-Brahmans in the Legislative Council. In January, 1919, orders were sent out directing Collectors that in appointing Clerks, Deputy Tahsildars, and Sub-Magistrates "posts should be distributed among Tamil and Telugu . . . in equal proportion. Brahmans should not exceed half the total number and at

[24] MRO, Home (Miscellaneous), Ordinary Series, G.O. 1289, Dec. 22, 1917.

[25] *MLCP*, XLV (Feb. 12, 1918), pp. 167, 190–192.

[26] MRO, Home (Miscellaneous), Ordinary Series, G.O. 1613, Nov. 20, 1919.

[27] MRO, Revenue, Miscellaneous Series, G.O. 3722, Nov. 21, 1918.

least half should be chosen from among non-Brahmans and Muhammadans." An additional order directed Collectors to compile a list of acceptable candidates according to these criteria.[28] Late that same year, after Lord Pentland and Cardew had left Madras, and on the eve of the implementation of the Montagu–Chelmsford Reforms, the Justice Party sent a petition to the Viceroy pleading that the glaring inequalities between Brahman and non-Brahman in the public services in Madras must be rectified. Nothing actually came of this petition, but A. R. Knapp, who later resisted attempts by the Justice Party to de-Brahmanize the administration at the expense of efficiency, noted that "of late years we have spared no pains to distribute appointments."[29]

For years, since the Board of Revenue's promulgation of Standing Order No. 128 in 1851, the Madras government had been trying to protect its district officers from becoming the victims of a district administration dominated by Brahmans. It was evident that the Brahmans were still in the majority, however, despite the attempts. As Brahman preponderance in the services became more and more apparent, the interest of the non-Brahmans in their own future created great public interest. The publication of the official testimony before the Public Services Commission in 1913, the formation of the Justice Party in 1916, and the existence within the Madras government of persons sympathetic to the non-Brahman position all helped to transform this situation. Thus when the Justice Party took office in late 1920 the stage was set for an all-out battle to achieve what "Fair Play" described as the rightful share of government employment for non-Brahmans.

The Communal Government Orders

An indication of the direction that Justice Party politics had taken was the increasing unwillingness on the part of Justice leaders to push social reform in their legislative program in the

[28] MRO, Revenue, Ordinary Series, G.O. 22, Jan. 2, 1919.
[29] MRO, Home (Miscellaneous), Ordinary Series, G.O. 19, Jan. 6, 1920.

new Councils. Instead, they concentrated on the immediate goal of greater non-Brahman representation in government employment, which was a natural continuation of the policies suggested by numerous *Justice* editorials and by the questions of Tambi Marakayar, Rajah, and Tyagaraja Chetti in the Council between 1918 and 1920. In the course of these attempts to enhance the non-Brahman position through the mechanism of an executive order, the relationship between Brahman and non-Brahman in the presidency was altered and in some cases seriously poisoned. What made this fight in the Council particularly rancorous was the continuous Justice Party pressure on the government and the inability of the minority Brahmans to organize.

In an effort to placate the non-Brahmans, several Brahmans in the Council spoke out in favor of an amicable settlement before the conflict became too bitter. One of these Council members (the only Madras Congress member who had ignored the Congress boycott of the 1920 Council elections), S. Srinivasa Iyengar, a Tamil Sri Vaishnava Brahman, said that there was no longer the same hostility in the political community of south India to non-Brahman claims as there had been in the past, and he thought that the non-Brahmans were most certaintly "entitled to get justice."[30] A week later he urged that the question be settled once and for all; he wanted "all communities," he said, "to arrive at a satisfactory solution to this burning question in this province," otherwise "communal questions" would distract the house from its ordinary work "of progress and nation-building" every few minutes.[31] This anxiety was prompted by the demands of several Justice Party members in the Council, O. Tanikachala Chetti, a Telugu Beri Chetti, B. Munuswami Naidu, a Telugu Kamma, and S. Somasundaram Mudaliar, a Tamil Vellala, that the government take the power of appointing District Munsifs

[30] *MLCP*, I A (Mar. 24, 1921), 1110.
[31] *Ibid.*, I B (Apr. 2, 1921), 1574.

out of the hands of the Madras High Court, because most of the High Court Judges were Brahmans.[32] Justice Party pressures on this issue were to some extent part of a larger plan to reduce Brahman influence. That it was the first segment of the public services to occupy the attention of Justice members is indicative of their particular desire to gain control of the Judiciary, a section of the civil service that was thought to confer great status and extraordinary powers over the destinies of men. From a very early period non-Brahman distrust of Brahman lawyers was manifested by the application of the epithet "Mylapore Clique" to this group, Mylapore being the area in Madras city where a large number of Tamil Brahman judges lived.[33]

The debate on this issue in the Legislative Council revealed how biased were the views of some non-Brahmans about Brahmans in the presidency—and how crudely they could be stated. It also showed to what extent the Justice Party in the Council could harass the government and the Brahmans. S. Somasundaram Pillai, one of the most vituperative of Justice politicians, spoke out in this fashion on the Brahman monopoly of judicial posts:

[32] In 1913, out of nine Indians on the High Court Bench, six were Brahmans, two were Muslims, and one (C. Sankaran Nair) was a non-Brahman. MRO, Public, Ordinary Series, G.O. 1129, Sept. 8, 1913.

[33] "The Mylapore Clique was most powerful in the High Court and the Judiciary, but its great influence permeated the Secretariat at Fort St. George and all the Tamil District administrations. It was not without its ramifications in the more important Telugu Districts—Guntur, Kistna, Godavaris [Godavari District was undivided between East and West in 1920], Vizag, and Bellary." Written statement given to the author by A. Kumaraswami Tampoe, Nov. 24, 1962. See also the remarks of the *Dravidan* for July 8, 1925, urging that the Judicial Department be under the control of non-Brahmans. Those persons appointed to the Judicial Department "as Munsifs, Sub-Judges and District Judges, are only Ayyars, Ayyangars and Sastris [surnames given to Brahmans in the Tamil area]. In short the whole Judicial Department is but a colony of Brahmans." *Madras NNR, 1925.*

> The Brahmans say that they are all very intelligent people and that by their mantras [spells] they can win all. It is said in [the] Panchatantram that Rajas and women are all influenced by persons who are near at hand. The Government was influenced by certain Brahmans only. Why should they blame the Brahmans? It is an instinct of human nature to help their own people in preference to others. It is only natural that Brahmans are predominating everywhere. For instance take the case of crows. When they get any crumb they at once call for their class and see that all of them are provided with it. So also the Brahmans send wireless telegraphy [*sic*] and appoint men of their own class to posts.[34]

In an effort to clarify the issues, K. Srinivasa Iyengar, the Law Member of the Executive Council, defended the right of the government to maintain the quality of personnel appointed to District Munsifships. The point he had tried to make, he said, was that "efficiency is the right test. I never said that Brahmans alone possessed efficiency." To this Tanikachala Chetti replied: "The implication was that non-Brahmans were inefficient. I put the question: Is it a fact that we are not efficient? . . . It is said that the non-Brahmans are not as intelligent as Brahmans. Have all the non-Brahman district munsifs, Sub Judges, District Judges and High Court Judges been inferior to Brahmans? Thus the claim for superior intelligence and efficiency is as ill-founded and untrue as it is audacious." To strengthen his point, Tanikachala Chetti drew an analogy between south India and Ireland, pointing out that in the same way as it was unfair for Protestant judges to administer justice in a predominantly Catholic country like Ireland, so also in an area such as south India, peopled for the most part by non-Brahman Hindus, it was "scandalous" for Brahmans to be in the majority in the public services.[35] A truce was established on this particular issue when a resolution calling upon

[34] *MLCP*, I B (Apr. 1, 1921), 1555.
[35] *Ibid.* (Apr. 2, 1921), pp. 1588, 1591.

the government to recruit personnel for the judiciary "from amongst non-Brahman Hindus, Christians and Muhammadans so as to secure a due representation of all different communities in the Judicial service" was passed by a large majority.[36]

Though some hoped that this measure of consensus would satisfy or perhaps delay other Justice demands, these expectations were not to be fulfilled. On August 5, 1921, a more serious conflict occurred in the Legislative Council over a resolution brought forward by Tanikachala Chetti recommending that the government issue an order directing appointing officers to give preference to non-Brahmans in *all* government services.[37] Six other resolutions were scheduled to be introduced by Justice Party members. One of these resolutions requested the appointment of a committee of non-Brahmans to report on the best means by which proportional representation in the Madras services could be secured; the others, which were ultimately dropped, were almost identical to the one proposed by Tanikachala Chetti. A. R. Knapp, Home Member in the Executive Council, whose responsibility it would be to carry out these recommendations, viewed them with dismay. "I am sure," he said, "that there are many in this House who, on looking at the agenda of this meeting, shared with me a feeling of regret that we were to spend many hours, if not days, in discussing no less than seven resolutions on the subject of communal representation in the public services." An inconclusive debate over Tanikachala Chetti's resolution provoked Knapp into agreeing reluctantly to a compromise resolution as a way of saving valuable time for the Council. The compromise read as follows:

> That with a view to increase the proportion of posts in Government offices held by non-Brahmans, the principles prescribed in B.S.O. [Board's Standing Order] No. 12 [clause] 2 be at once extended to

[36] *Ibid.*, pp. 1590, 1591.

[37] For the details of this meeting and the quotations in this and the following paragraph see *ibid.*, II (Aug. 5, 1921), 424–438.

all departments of the Government and be made applicable not only to the principal appointments but to posts of all grades, and that the government should issue orders accordingly and insist on their being enforced, and that to this end half-yearly returns showing the progress made should be submitted by the head of each office. Such periodical returns shall be made available to the members of the Legislative Council.

In the belief that this compromise would satisfy the Justice Party and would provide it with the requisite assurance that the government was willing to go to considerable lengths to implement the principles set out in the Board's Standing Order, especially with the proviso that the members of the Legislative Council would have access to the results of these efforts, all the members of the Legislative Council, including the Brahmans, joined in passing the resolution unanimously.

The ease with which this resolution was pushed through invited further attempts from Justice members. Another resolution, quickly submitted, was directed specifically at the Madras Government Secretariat: it demanded that the principles implicit in Knapp's compromise resolution be applied to appointments in the Secretariat, which was known to employ a high proportion of Brahmans. Knapp accused Tanikachala Chetti, who introduced the resolution, of "ruffling the calm"; he especially resented this criticism of Secretariat employment procedures because a "peculiarly high standard" was expected from Secretariat employees. Knapp pointed out that, in the beginning, only First Class graduates had been admitted to the Secretariat, but with the increase in work and the shortage of First Class candidates, the Secretariat had been forced to recruit Honors graduates as well. Knapp stressed that he had gone to great trouble to look over the list of applications for employment in the Secretariat, but he had found few non-Brahmans with the necessary qualifications. Finally, he was quite unwilling to discard the principle of efficiency in seeking men for Secretariat posts and to "supersede

men at the top on the grounds of caste," for, as he said, "I do not attach any importance whatever to the statistics of the population of Madras as giving us an indication of the number of persons of any particular community whom we might expect to be employed in the Secretariat."

In the face of Knapp's implacable opposition to Justice harassment, it seemed improbable that anything substantial would come of this sparring. However, Justice pressure was sufficiently strong to force the Government of Madras to issue a Government Order on September 16, 1921, which came to be known as the First Communal G.O. Its provisions (which are set out in full in appendix 2) included a government instruction that the Board's Standing Order No. 128, Clause 2, be extended from the Revenue to *all* departments. Secondly, a report was required of all Heads of Departments, Collectors, and District Judges twice a year indicating the classification of each new recruit to the public services according to the following six categories: Brahman, non-Brahman Hindu, Indian Christian, Muslim, European, Anglo-Indian, and others.[38]

The issuance of this First Communal G.O. was the Justice Party's first major breakthrough. It proved that if it pressed the government hard enough it could force it into a policy that would help the non-Brahmans in their rise to administrative and economic position. At the same time, the winning of this preliminary part of its legislative program gave the party the morale and self-confidence it needed to pursue its efforts. A month after the First Communal G.O. was issued the Justice Party did in fact enter upon another, more strident, campaign to coerce the government into issuing a still more comprehensive statement which would give a conclusive majority to the non-Brahmans in the services. In a resolution asking that a special officer be deputed to gather statistics of the total number of Brahmans, non-Brah-

[38] MRO, Public, Ordinary Series, G.O. 613, Sept. 16, 1921.

mans, and others in government employment, Tanikachala Chetti urged that these statistics should not be limited to an analysis of new recruits but should constitute a comprehensive review of government employment policy. He also wanted these returns to be submitted to the Council, so that its members could see whether "we have been going forwards or whether we have been going backwards" in the recruitment of non-Brahmans. Knapp dismissed this resolution on the grounds that it served no public purpose and that it was not a "matter of very great importance."[39]

On this occasion Knapp was able to forestall any government action, but soon after this he was appointed Special Commissioner to settle the Moplah rebellion in Malabar, and Sir Lionel Davidson, a man far more sympathetic to Justice Party claims, took over as Home Member. On August 15, 1922, another government order was issued under the sponsorship of Sir Lionel and Sir Charles Todhunter which was longer, more comprehensive, and much more definitive than the First Communal G.O. Popularly referred to as the Second Communal G.O. (it is reproduced in full in appendix 3), this major policy decision declared that the government concurred entirely in the desire of the members of the Legislative Council for information on the six categories set out in the First Communal G.O., not only for new appointments but for all government employees, including personnel in permanent, temporary, or acting appointments, and those appointed either for the first time or promoted from subordinate grades. It further directed that the principle implicit in the Board of Revenue's Standing Order No. 128, Clause 2—that the main appointments in each district should be "divided among the several communities"—should be realized not only at the time of recruitment but at every "point at which men are promoted wholly by selection and not by seniority." In order to keep Legislative Council members informed of the progress made in distributing the gov-

[39] *MLCP*, III (Oct. 15, 1921), 1274–1278.

ernment appointments among all the communities of the presidency, yearly returns were to be made by heads of departments "showing the extent to which each of the six main sub-divisions is represented in each department." Gazetted or listed officers were required to indicate into which of these six subdivisions they fitted, so that this information could be added to the Quarterly Civil List.[40]

This order was an important landmark in the history of the Justice Party and in the non-Brahman movement generally, and the effect that its promulgation had upon Justice Party members cannot be overstated. By giving in to Justice pressure the government had fulfilled a goal that had been a part of Justice propaganda and thinking since the founding of the party in 1916. Yet it was to become quickly apparent that this important policy decision now on the record books was perhaps too easy a solution to the problems of Brahman–non-Brahman competition for government jobs. The party, with one of its main focuses of attention removed, was left open to fragmentation. In achieving its aims as painlessly and easily as it did, the Justice Party was paving the way to its own early demise.

In February, 1924, the Madras government took the penultimate step in resolving the conflict produced by the ever increasing demands of the non-Brahmans in the Legislative Council for increased representation in government services. This step was the establishment of a Staff Selection Board consisting of three senior civil servants and two nonofficial appointees of the governor.[41] It was made quite clear by the government order establishing the Staff Selection Board (see appendix 4) that the Board itself was intended as an examination body which would eliminate the dangers implicit in nomination or patronage and would utilize the device of competitive examination, but would also take

[40] MRO, Public, Ordinary Series, G.O. 658, Aug. 15, 1922.
[41] *Ibid.*, G.O. 76, Feb. 6, 1924.

into account the principles set forth in the Second Communal G.O. By this mechanism, the government hoped to take the discussion of its recruitment policy out of the legislative arena and put it on a more impartial and nonpolitical basis, while at the same time honoring the principles articulated in the Second Communal G.O. Establishing a Staff Selection Board was also a means whereby the Madras government could deflect pressure from the central Indian government to cooperate with the central Public Services Commission expected to come into existence shortly after the time of the Government of India's circular entitled "The Services under the Reforms," which was discussed in chapter 4. In 1919 the central government had communicated to the Madras government a scheme whereby such a commission might be established for the whole of British India to institute "some more impersonal method of selection" for government personnel.[42] Many members of the Madras government felt, however, that a commission of this sort could never know Madras conditions well enough to take over the job of selecting candidates, and the Madras government therefore preferred to set up its own Staff Selection Board.[43] In 1929 Madras became the first province to institute a provincial Public Services Commission.[44]

Since the constitution of a Staff Selection Board removed discussion concerning communal representation in government jobs from the Legislative Council, it was seen by many Justice Party

[42] *Ibid.*, G.O. 392, July 3, 1919.

[43] See the speech of Sir Charles Todhunter, *MLCP*, XVII (Mar. 22, 1924), 955: "the people in Madras are the people who know who are the most suitable candidates from among the Madrasis. We know better whether Ramaswami or Ponuswami is a suitable candidate for a certain post better than the Government of India do because we know our own people better."

[44] A description of the functions performed by the Madras Public Services Commission can be found in Great Britain, Indian Statutory Commission, Vol. VI, *Memorandum Submitted to the Indian Statutory Commission by the Madras Government*, p. 626.

members as a distinct loss of power. They feared that their opportunities to criticize the government's employment policy would diminish and that appointments previously under the control of the Legislative Council would be removed from its purview. The first man to question the validity of the new board was Mariadas Ratnaswami, a Tamil Catholic. Ratnaswami contended that the Staff Selection Board would not be impersonal or unbiased, and since its members would include heads of departments, it was almost inevitable that each department head would determine the appointments within his own department. He further objected that the establishment of the board would mean that Council members and ministers would lose their control over appointments. The Council was quickly reassured on this point by the Rajah of Panagal, who, as Minister for Local Self-Government, controlled the greatest number of appointments: the Staff Selection Board, he said, was not expected to make "appointments which have been hitherto made either by the Ministers or by Members of the Executive Council." Ratnaswami's resolution to cut the funds for the support of the Staff Selection Board was then defeated.[45]

Justice members also criticized the Staff Selection Board on the grounds that it would not represent the intention or interests of non-Brahmans or the principles set out in the Communal G.O.s. Only a month after the establishment of the Board, C. Natesa Mudaliar, who was primarily interested in communal representation in the services, asked Sir Charles Todhunter whether or not the Board was honoring the principles set forth in the Communal G.O. The answer he received was more a description of the functions of the Board than an analysis of its recruitment procedures,[46] and some months later he approached the question more directly. There was, he said in October, "a great deal of heart-burning and

[45] *MLCP*, XVII (Mar. 22, 1924), 954, 964, 971.
[46] *Ibid.*, XVII (Mar. 21, 1924), 839–840.

discontent" as a result of the belief that the Communal G.O.s were not being observed.[47] A. Ramaswami Mudaliar now joined in the battle. As the Justice spokesman in the House—a position he had won through his eloquence and debating skills—Ramaswami Mudaliar argued that the Board could never represent the interests of the presidency, much less the Council. P. N. Marthandam Pillai, a Vellala, also of the Justice Party, demanded that if "the country of the Hottentots must be governed by the Hottentots and if Southern India is populated by non-Brahmins, who are in a majority, Southern India must be governed by Non-Brahmins."[48]

At this point the Madras government, represented by R. A. Graham, the Finance Minister, took up the defense. The government should exist for the benefit for the entire population of the presidency, Graham declared, and it was wrong of the non-Brahman Hindus to want to dominate the Staff Selection Board and turn it into a partisan body:

> The only purpose for which a Board consisting of non-Brahman Hindus could be constituted would be for the purpose of seeing that no one except non-Brahman Hindus is appointed to Government service. The Government on the other hand adhere to the principles laid down in G.O. No. 658 [the Second Communal G.O.] that all communities should be properly represented and that steps should be taken to see that they are represented. I entirely repudiate

[47] *Ibid.*, XX (Oct. 15, 1924), 510. See also the remarks of the *Dravidan* on Nov. 13, 1924: "Where is G.O. 658 [the Second Communal G.O.]? . . . If there is no such [Staff Selection] Board, questions may be asked as to why Brahmans alone are appointed and not members of other communities and why G.O. 658 has not been given effect to. But, if such questions are asked now, the Government can very easily plead the lame excuse that they had appointed only one of the candidates by [*sic.*] the Board and go on giving appointments to Brahmans. Hence it is certain that the Government have constituted this Board for killing communal representation." *Madras NNR, 1924.*

[48] *MLCP*, XXIII (Mar. 23, 1925), 590.

any idea that only such persons should be appointed as are approved by one or another party.[49]

Unlike earlier occasions when the Madras government had been forced to modify its original position on non-Brahman representation, Graham could now hold his ground effectively against the pressure of the Justice Party because he could always point to the existence of a comprehensive and authoritative statement giving non-Brahmans a distinct advantage in government employment. The pressure did not end, however. There were objections in late 1925 from J. P. Saldanha, an Indian Christian from the west coast, and the following year from Ramaswami Mudaliar.[50] At last, in December, 1928, the government agreed to the establishment of a Communal Representation Committee, which would survey the procedures of the Staff Selection Board.[51]

Justice Party drives for greater administrative power during the years 1920 through 1926 had foisted upon a reluctant bureaucracy a means by which it could neutralize the constant rattle of questions and resolutions in the Council on the matter of non-Brahman representation in the services. But the great esprit de corps which success in this direction engendered among the non-Brahmans, and the willingness of at least some senior British bureaucrats in the Madras government to cooperate with the Justice Party in its upward journey, also produced a marked polarization of political forces in the presidency. The bitterness between the two sides was reflected in the debates in the Legisla-

[49] *Ibid.*, p. 599.

[50] MRO, Public, Miscellaneous Series, G.O. 872, Sept. 12, 1925; *ibid.*, G.O. 854, Sept. 30, 1926.

[51] The Government Order (G.O. No. 1129, dated Dec. 15, 1928, Public Service Department) provided that out of every twelve government posts "five had to go to non-Brahmin Hindus, two to Brahmins, two to Muslims, two to Anglo-Indians or Christians, and one to the Depressed Classes (Harijans)." Quoted in M. N. Srinivas, *Social Change in Modern India* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1966), p. 109.

tive Council, in which it was evident that the Brahmans were out of their element in the increasingly competitive style of communal politics.[52] The Madras government was quite aware of the antipathy, as it showed in passing the Communal G.O.s and establishing first a Staff Selection Board and finally the first provincial Public Services Commission. As we have seen, these developments, successful as they were for the Justice Party, also made the party increasingly vulnerable to disintegration. Not only did it lack a real goal, but it was faced with growing hostility from a once friendly government. But those who suffered most from the communal quarrel were the Brahmans, who were losing their position of superiority not only in the Council but in the educational world. Satyamurti, the Swaraj leader, a Tamil Smartha Brahman, referring to the establishment of selection committees to assist non-Brahmans to enter government colleges, protested against what he termed "this nefarious attempt to deny the benefit of education to a section of the people because they have the misfortune of being born in a particular community."[53] There could be little doubt that the challenge to the Brahmans in the services, in the Council, and in education was threatening the very means by which Brahmans in south India could maintain their culture, standing, and economic position. The wheel had turned full circle.

The *Hindu* (Nov. 17, 1923), noting the increasing distrust between Brahmans and non-Brahmans at the time of the elections to the second Reformed Council, characterized this issue as having provided the Madras bureaucracy with the means to divide and rule the presidency:

> But other "problems" have cropped up presumably to their delight calculated to make united, effective action on the part of the

[52] See R. V. Krishna Ayyar, *In the Legislature of Those Days* (Madras, 1956), p. 15.

[53] *MLCP*, XV (Nov. 27, 1923), 62.

> Council an impossibility. For not only have the racial, religious, caste . . . "differences" been accentuated, but other fresh antipathies have arisen into prominence. The claims of linguistic and local patriotism have been set up. . . . In the last three years [1920–1923], the Council's energies . . . were utilized in tackling the Brahmin–non-Brahmin problem. In the next triennium, is the Council to have nothing better to do than set up and attempt to solve a Tamil–Andhra problem? If the Council seriously engaged itself on that issue, when can it get rid of such issues and set itself up to broader, more useful and national problems.

The years 1920–1923 had indeed been marked by great controversy in the Legislative Council, and the *Hindu* was perceptive in anticipating a debate between the Telugus and the Tamils. The way in which this debate occurred and the issues that were debated were, indeed, a clear result of the prevailing style of politics in Madras at this time, in which each group, linguistic or caste, sought to establish its own position and identity in public life.

The Andhra University Bill

Bitterness between Tamils and Telugus was not without precedent. The Andhra movement of 1913, and the struggle (see chap. 2) within the Congress organization for a separate unit for the Telugus had involved considerable bitterness. Congress solved the Tamil–Telugu antagonism in 1917 by granting the Telugus their own unit, giving them control in their own linguistic region and thus providing a measure of insulation between the Telugus and the Tamils to the south. The Andhras had had additional demands, as expressed by Konda Venkatapayya and Pattabhi Sitaramayya (both Neyogi Brahmans), including a separate province for Telugu speakers and their own Andhra university. But agitation for these demands had been put aside at the time first by Montagu's visit, then by the discussion of the Reforms themselves, and finally by Gandhi's noncooperation movement.

K. V. Reddi Naidu, speaking in 1925, considered the decline in the Andhra agitation for a separate province and university for Telugus a result of the diversion of energies into "the non-Brahmin movement and later the non-co-operation movement."[54]

A number of Andhras entered the Legislative Council in 1920, and on two occasions, once in 1921 and again in 1922, they questioned the government about its attitudes toward the formation of a separate Andhra state and university. On the second of these occasions, a Telugu Brahman named M. Suryanarayana from Vizagapatam district introduced a resolution recommending that the Madras government create a separate Andhra province.[55] This resolution provoked a serious difference of opinion among the Executive Council and among the three Justice Party ministers. It is important to remember in connection with these discussions that the Joint Parliamentary Committee in 1919 had provided for a commission to be appointed by the Secretary of State to inquire into requests made by "any distinctive racial or linguistic territorial unit" for a separate province.[56] With this in mind, Sir Charles Todhunter wrote a long minute for the Government of Madras on the history of linguistic demands in the Imperial and Legislative Assemblies in Delhi and in the Madras Legislative Council. When the time came for Suryanarayana to press his resolution, A. P. Patro, the Justice Education Minister, persuaded him to desist. But Reddi Naidu, in his minute, still felt there was room for the demand and the reality of a separate Andhra province:

> The Telugus of the Northern Circars have always agitated for a separate Andhra Province and those in the Ceded districts are not

[54] *Ibid.*, XXIV (Aug. 21, 1925), 502.

[55] *Ibid.*, IV (Jan. 19, 1922), 1987.

[56] Great Britain, Parliamentary Papers, Vol. IV (*Reports of Committees*, Vol. II), House of Commons Paper No. 203, November, 1919, "Joint Select Committee on the Government of India Bill, Vol. I: Report of the Committee," p. 9.

> in favor of it or, at any rate, are not enthusiastic about it. Personally, I have always been of [the] opinion that an Andhra Province is a necessity. But owing to differences between Brahmins and non-Brahmins in recent years, my attitude has slightly altered. I am still in favour of a separate province for the Andhras provided statuatory guarantees are made for a majority of non-Brahmins in the Legislative Council and in the public services of the new provinces.[57]

Norman Marjoribanks, a senior I.C.S. member, commented that it would be "interesting to see how the proposition is reconciled to the idea of Indian nationalism."[58]

Though a demand for a separate Andhra province did not arise in the Council proceedings again until early 1927,[59] the idea of an Andhra university was seriously broached soon after the establishment of the first Justice ministry. A. P. Patro, the Education Minister, brought forward a scheme for such a university as an equalizing device to the bill, then pending, to reorganize and strengthen Madras University. For non-Brahmans, at least, Madras University was understood to be a university primarily geared to the interests of Tamil Brahmans, where non-Brahmans and especially students from Telugu areas were looked upon as unwelcome foreigners. It was natural for the Tamil non-Brahmans to regard the reorganization bill as an attempt by the Brahmans to

[57] MRO, Public, Ordinary Series, G.O. 82, Jan. 22, 1922.

[58] *Ibid.* Todhunter also noted: "Going into the matter I am not sure that the feeling does not come to this also, that the Telugu, say, has for officers one set of foreigners (Englishmen), and if and when they depart he does not want to exchange them for another set of foreigners (Tamils), just as the Burmans want no Indians in their Civil Service."

[59] When this resolution came before the Council, the *Madras Mail* (Feb. 17, 1927) stated a belief that was repeated many times in post-Independence India. Those who wanted a separate Andhra are "advocates of methods which, if followed, may break India up into a series of petty states, jealous of each other, and at the mercy of any powerful central government."

tighten their hold on an already over-Brahmanized institution.[60] But to the Andhra members of the Council the bill was even more than that—a threat to their hopes for a separate university. The Madras University Reorganization Bill was subsequently passed, but on the eve of its becoming law, in March, 1923, G. Vandanam pointed out that "those of us who supported the organization scheme of Madras University did so on the distinct understanding that the Madras University reorganization would help us to get an Andhra University at no distant date."[61]

When the suggestion to create an Andhra university was first brought up in 1921, C. Natesa Mudaliar, a Tamil Vellala in the Justice Party, raised some strong objections on the grounds that it was impossible to define Andhras or the Andhra country. In the course of a somewhat devious speech laden with historical arguments, he finally came out with his real objection to the idea. Any resolution, he said, that proposed the creation of an Andhra university "savours of disunion among the members of the non-Brahmin community." Despite reassurances that the establishment of an Andhra university "will not affect our non-Brahmin movement in the least," many Tamil Justice members still had misgivings. One Tamil Sri Vaishnava Brahman, interestingly enough, supported the scheme on the grounds that it would "help to advance knowledge, will help to advance the status and civilization of the people, and it will be the first step and the next step will immediately be another university for Tamil land."[62]

Natesa Mudaliar's opposition to an Andhra university epitomized the distrust with which many Tamils in the Justice Party viewed any efforts of the Telugus to enhance their already substantial position in the party. Tyagaraja Chetti fostered the dis-

[60] Speech of C. Natesa Mudaliar, *MLCP*, IX (Nov. 15, 1922), 723–724.
[61] *Ibid.*, XII (Mar. 17, 1923), 2413.
[62] See *ibid.*, II (Sept. 2, 1921), 721–725.

trust by neglecting the Tamils in the constitution of the first Justice ministry in 1920, and the antipathy came to a head in 1922. In a stormy party meeting in Madras in May of that year, J. N. Ramanathan, who came from the Tamil district of Madura, accused Tyagaraja Chetti of failing to recognize the hard work and zeal of many Tamils in the party:

> The Tamilians have been noted for their hospitality, and I am proud that the Tamilians have contributed not a little to the strength of the party in power as is evident from the staunch support within the Council and from the princely and loyal receptions accorded to the Ministerial progress in the Southern [Tamil] part of the Presidency; whereas the tours [of the Ministers] have been marked by many hartals and hostilities in the Northern [Telugu] parts. This clearly illustrates that the followers or admirers of Sanskrit have no sympathy with the [non-Brahmin] movement, whereas the movement is held dear by the Tamilians.[63]

Ramanathan warned Tyagaraja Chetti that if no Tamil minister found a place in the next Justice ministry in late 1923, the Tamilians in the Justice Party might break away from the party altogether. In August, 1923, at Trichinopoly, a group of Tamil discontents in the party held a Tamil Nadu Non-Brahman Conference, in defiance of the annual Justice confederations held in December. The Rajah of Ramnad, one of the dissidents, told his audience that "the Tamils with an ancient civilization and a tradition of unexampled glory have now elected themselves into a distinct political party in order that their interests may be specially safeguarded and advanced."[64]

As a peace offering, Tyagaraja Chetti suggested that for the 1923 Justice ministry Reddi Naidu should step aside as Minister of Development to allow the appointment of a Tamil, T. N. Sivagnanam Pillai, a Vellala from Tinnevelly district. The peace

[63] *Hindu*, May 28, 1922.
[64] *Ibid.*, Aug. 18, 1923.

offering was accepted gracefully, and harmony was restored. The Telugus then got their university with the help of the Tamils, who joined them in late 1925 in approving a bill that would establish a university for the "rapid development in the study of Telugu language and literature."[65] There was some opposition from the Telugus to the title "Andhra University." Reddi Naidu (now no longer a minister) contended that the bill should be called the Telugu University Bill. Both "Andhra" and "kingdom of the Andhras" were, he insisted, Aryan in origin: "We Telugus have always been recognized as Dravidians (hear, hear), and when I ask this bill to be named after the Telugus, I appeal to my Dravidian friends, my Tamil friends, my Kanarese friends, my Malayalam friends, not to part with us as different from them."[66] Similar appeals to common Dravidian origins were made by others in the debate on the Andhra university in an attempt to prevent a party split between the Tamils and the Telugus. Natesa Mudaliar, who had doubted the wisdom of forming an Andhra university on the grounds that it might tend to divide the party, now appealed for unity: "Telugus can never be separated from the Tamils," he said. "We are Dravidians and will not be separated." Ramaswami Mudaliar also pointed out that the Telugu University would be concerned with Dravidian culture in contradistinction to Sanskritic studies. These attempts to establish a Dravidian identity provoked S. Satyamurti, of the Swaraj Party, to plead that the Council members ought to "show by our votes that Brahmin-hatred must stop at the Staff Selection Board and must go no further."[67] Reddi Naidu's proposed amendment was rejected,[68] and the bill was passed by the Council on November 6, 1925. The following year Andhra University, after a great contro-

[65] See *MLCP*, XXIV (Aug. 20, 1925), 366.
[66] *Ibid.*, XXV (Oct. 28, 1925), 122.
[67] *Ibid.*, pp. 124–125, 128.
[68] The vote on the amendment to change the title to "The Telugu University Bill" was 24–26 against. *Ibid.*, p. 129.

versy as to who should be Vice Chancellor, came into existence with C. Ramalinga Reddi as the Vice Chancellor.

Tamilians now also began to demand that a separate university be created in the heart of the Tamil country to serve the interests of Tamil culture, since Madras University, with its Sanskritic and Brahmanical affiliations, was unable to give Tamil-speakers the right kind of cultural atmosphere and training. Their demand was supported by the Madras University Senate, which passed a resolution recommending the establishment of a university for each "principal linguistic area within the Presidency." As a result of a discussion in the Council on March 22, 1926, a Tamil University Committee (originally under the chairmanship of the Justice Party Development Minister, T. N. Sivagnanam Pillai) was set up. During the course of 1927 it took evidence from a great many educators, politicians, and others as to the precise nature that the proposed Tamil university should take. P. T. Srinivasa Iyengar, a Tamil Sri Vaishnava Brahman scholar of considerable academic repute, who had suggested the need for an Andhra university in 1916, told the committee that there was a good deal of popular demand for a Tamil university.[69] Another Tamil professor, S. Somasundara Bharati, said that "the mere fact that the Tamils see that the Andhras have achieved a university of their culture and language has whetted the desire of the Tamilians for a university."[70] The deciding factor was the receipt of a substantial endowment from Sir Annamalai Chetti, a member of the Nattukottai Chetti caste group long famous for its donations to temples and other religious and educational establishments, both non-Brahman and Brahman. Thus Tamil wishes were met, and in 1929 a uni-

[69] Madras Presidency, *Report of the Tamil University Committee, 1927: Evidence, Part II* (Madras, 1927), p. 123. See also *New India*, May 10, 1916.

[70] *Report of the Tamil University Committee*, p. 138. In 1938 Somasundara Bharati protested the imposition of Hindustani in the public schools of Madras.

versity, called Annamalai University, was founded at the temple center of Chidambaram in South Arcot district. Under the terms of the grant, the university was to encourage both Tamil and Sanskrit.[71]

The passage of both the Madras University Reorganization Bill and the Andhra University Bill put great strains on Telugu–Tamil unity within the Justice Party. The problem had no doubt been aggravated by P. Tyagaraja Chetti with his failure to see the necessity of cultivating Tamil sympathies during the formation of the first Justice ministry. But its basic cause lay in the desire of each group to prevent the other from getting too large a share of the spoils, either in educational or in administrative spheres, and non-Brahman demands were often characterized by a type of competition along linguistic lines which could only be cemented over by appeals to a common Dravidian origin. This sort of appeal in turn tended to push the Brahmans even further away, making political and social equilibrium between non-Brahmans and Brahmans increasingly impossible.

The Hindu Religious Endowments Act

One legislative measure that resulted from the first two Justice ministries was an act to regulate the administration of the many temples and *maths* or monastic chapters that dotted the Madras countryside. It had long been recognized that such a measure was necessary to correct the abuse of powers by committees and individuals placed in charge of Hindu endowment funds and to eliminate the costly law suits that resulted from this maladministration. But the British policy of neutrality in questions of religion prevented any action being taken until after the introduction of the Montagu–Chelmsford Reforms, which made local self-govern-

[71] Annamalai University, *Silver Jubilee Souvenir, 1929–54* (Annamalainagar, 1955), pp. 146, 148. One witness to the University Committee, Ramaswami Mudaliar, thought the university should be called Dravida University; see *Report of the Tamil University Committee*, p. 40.

ment—endowments were included in its jurisdiction—a transferred subject.

The Justice Party, in which there were many practicing Hindus, had always included in its program the regulation of endowments,[72] and certainly none of the Justice leaders regarded the bill as it was finally passed, the Hindu Religious Endowments Act, as an attack upon religion. Many of the Tamilians in the party were devotees of the Saiva Siddhanta religious system, and the Rajah of Panagal, who introduced the bill to the Legislative Council, true to his Velama traditions, had an M.A. in Sanskrit from Madras University and would on occasion quote from the *Puranas*.[73] Even the more reformist wing of the party, represented by Kandaswami Chetti and the Rajah of Ramnad, did not go beyond urging the reform of the non-Brahman community in order to make it less dependent upon Brahmans as priests.[74] Their attitude toward social reform was epitomized by a resolution passed at the Justice Confederation in January, 1923, which stated that the "Non-Brahmins should . . . train a batch of '*Purohits*' [priests] to officiate at their marriages and they should encourage matrimonial alliances between one section of the Non-Brahmin community and another."[75] During this period few Justice Party members criticized Brahmans as priests in the manner later adopted by Dravidianists in the late 1920's and 1930's. With the exception of a few persons like Pakirswami Pillai, the furthest most Justice members would go in this direction was illustrated by arguments set forth by a Telugu named M. Venkata Ratnam in a series of articles in *Justice*, which were reprinted under the title *Reform of the Brahmins.* In these articles Venkata Ratnam

[72] See MRO, Home (Miscellaneous), Ordinary Series, G.O. 169, Jan. 22, 1919: Proceedings of the Tanjore–Trichinopoly Conference held on March 30 and 31, 1918. See also the resolution passed at the Coimbatore Conference of the Justice Party on Aug. 19, 1917, in T. Varadarajulu Naidu (comp.), *The Justice Movement, 1917*, Section II, p. 21.

[73] *MLCP*, XXV (Nov. 4, 1925), 908–909.

[74] *Hindu*, Aug. 18, 1923.

[75] *Ibid.*, Jan. 16, 1923.

quoted from Abbé Dubois' famous statement of south Indian religious life in the early nineteenth century—his *Hindu Manners, Customs, and Ceremonies*[76]—to show how degenerate Brahmans had become. Venkata Ratnam also articulated a central belief held by many non-Brahmans in the Justice Party—that if the non-Brahmans were to gain the respect and allegiance of other members of the Hindu community, they would have to reform their own religious and social customs.

The bill that was finally introduced into the Council was conservative and restrained. But coming after years of strict noninterference in religious endowments by the Madras government, which was anxious not to do anything that might be construed as a "desire on the part of the government to meddle with the religious affairs of the Hindus" or to take over the "management of their properties,"[77] the bill was considered a radical departure.

Indeed, the Government of Madras seemed remarkably timid, despite the considerable pressure over a long period from both Brahmans and non-Brahmans.[78] In its first form, the 1923 bill, which would merely have eliminated the "maladministration of the trust properties" of the temples and *maths* of the presidency, was in fact vetoed by the Select Committee of the Council. The committee recommended, however, that a Board of Commissioners should be established to supervise the working of the endowments, to settle disputes over the use of temple and *math* funds, and to levy funds from certain temples which attracted a large number of devotees to pay for sanitation and roads around the pilgrim center.[79]

[76] See the translation by Henry K. Beauchamp (3d ed.; Oxford, 1920).

[77] P. Ramanatha Iyer, *Madras Hindu Religious Endowments Act (Act II of 1927)* (3d ed.; Madras, 1946), p. 28.

[78] See, for instance, MRO, Public, Ordinary Series, G.O. 397, Apr. 9, 1901; G.O. 658, Sept. 6, 1906; G.O. 335, Mar. 17, 1914; and G.O. 1270, July 3, 1916. See also the description of attempts in the Legislative Council in Ramanatha Iyer, *Madras Hindu Religious Endowments Act*, pp. 1–28.

[79] *MLCP*, XIV (Mar. 26, 1923), 2836.

The bill encountered much opposition not only from members of the Council but from temples and *maths* such as the Chidambaram Temple, the Ashta Math at Udipi in South Kanara district,[80] and the famous Tirupati Temple in Chittoor district. But it was finally passed and sent on to the Governor. He declined to approve it, however, until certain amendments had been added, and returned it to the Council. It was passed by the Second Council, but a procedural wrangle then ensued, and in 1925 the bill was reintroduced, there being doubts as to the validity, on technical grounds, of the original measure.[81]

Throughout this period, despite a general agreement on the measure, the bill was strongly criticized. Many persons objected that it was being rushed, that too little time was available for a discussion of all its aspects.[82] Difficulties cropped up over the bill's guiding principle of levying funds from temples to pay for amenities at the pilgrimage centers.[83] The Rajah of Panagal assured Council members that usages peculiar to each endowment would be respected, and he promised that the Board of Commissioners established by the bill would not lead to additional expense but would in fact diminish the needless and costly litigation caused by temple mismanagement of funds.[84] Nonetheless, many Brahmans continued to fear that such a board would mean interference in religious affairs. P. Subaroyan (Chief Minister of Madras between 1926 and 1930) told T. M. Narasimhacharlu, a moderately orthodox Brahman from Cuddapah district, that his complaints were unreasonable and that he could not expect the board to be composed of orthodox Brahmans.[85]

[80] See *Madras Hindu Religious Endowments Act*, pp. 29–31.

[81] R. V. Krishna Ayyar, *In the Legislature of Those Days*, pp. 24–25. See also the *Memorandum Submitted to the Indian Statutory Commission by the Madras Government*, pp. 239–240.

[82] *MLCP*, X (Dec. 18, 1922), 907; *ibid.*, XIII (Mar. 22, 1923), 2810–2811.

[83] *Hindu*, Jan. 10, 1923; and *MLCP*, X (Dec. 18, 1922), 911.

[84] *MLCP*, X (Dec. 19, 1922), 1008; *ibid.*, XIV (Mar. 27, 1923), 2914.

[85] *Ibid.*, XIV (Mar. 27, 1923), 2920, 2933, 2924–2925.

It was probably inevitable, however fair the intentions of the bill, that a measure of this sort which broke with the British tradition of neutrality toward religion and religious affairs, especially since it was sponsored by a party that openly opposed Brahman superiority in the public life of south India, should have provoked harsh feelings. Natesa Mudaliar of the Justice Party decried Brahman opposition to the bill and to the Board of Commissioners; he even suggested that the board should consist mainly of non-Brahmans, since most of the endowment funds came from non-Brahmans, though he maintained that he was not bringing up the communal question. "I assure the House that I have no hatred for any community," he declared. "I love all communities alike."[86]

Most of the antagonism between the Brahmans and the non-Brahmans was not so much over the Board of Commissioners as over the inclusion of *maths*. This was hardly surprising, for many *maths* were managed by Brahman *matadhipatis*, who, according to Brahman critics of the bill, had never been accused of maladministration. Control over the activities of *maths* by a Board of Commissioners was therefore unnecessary. Furthermore, secular control of them would be cutting at the roots of "spiritualism which we regard as one of our valuable assets."[87] None of these arguments impressed Somasundaram Pillai, who made a long and spirited speech condemning the *matadhipatis*:

> I know a lot about *matadhipatis* and temples and I am reminded in this connexion of an anecdote which is current in Hampshire. The anecdote says that a passer-by once asked another man to direct him to a certain place. The latter advised him to walk straight to the north till he met a parson, then turn to the right and walk till he met a bishop, and then if he were to turn to the left, a few minutes would bring him to his destination. And the passerby said, "What do you mean by this? Do you mean to say that the parson and the bishop will wait for the pleasure of meeting me?"

[86] *Ibid.*, XIV (Mar. 28, 1923), 2969.
[87] See *Ibid.*, XIV (Apr. 3, 1923), 3213–3214.

> Then the other man said, "Why, Sir, we call a sign-post a parson, and a broken sign-post a bishop; for a sign-post only directs, but does not lead, and a broken sign-post neither directs nor leads." This anecdote applies to some of our temples and *matadhipatis* — temples which only direct but do not lead, and *matadhipatis* who neither direct nor lead.[88]

Somasundaram Pillai was one of the few members of the Justice Party who articulated in the Council a distrust of Brahmans as priests.[89] But these statements helped to bring all kinds of abuse, threats, and even incantations on the heads of Justice ministers for their interference with the religious life of the presidency.[90]

In many ways the most outstanding quality of all these legislative enterprises — the Communal G.O.s, the Andhra University Bill, and the Hindu Religious Endowments Act — was their provincial orientation. Both the sponsors and the critics of these measures believed that they were contending with problems that were unique to Madras presidency, or, if not unique, at least more urgent and more in need of legislation in Madras than in any other province. In this sense, the functions of the Reforms were being amply fulfilled, and the Council was performing its intended role, that of enhancing political awareness, not only of provincial issues but of issues of importance generally, both within the House and out. Perhaps the success of the Councils under a non-Brahman ministry was bound to exacerbate the feelings of distrust and uneasiness between Brahman and non-Brahman,[91]

88 *Ibid.*, XIV (Mar. 27, 1923), 2922.

89 The *Dravidan* also criticized the *matadhipatis*, specifically for spending the money of the *maths* irresponsibly: "Why should not the money now wasted largely on litigation and in other iniquitous ways be spent hereafter for propagating the Saivite creed [Saiva Siddhanta], improving the Tamil language and helping the educational institutions in general?" *Dravidan*, Feb. 3, 1923 (*Madras NNR, 1923*).

90 See *MLCP*, XV (Nov. 28, 1923), 107.

91 See the *Madras Mail*, Mar. 12, 1921; also the *Memorandum Submitted to the Indian Statutory Commission by the Madras Government*, p. 306.

between Telugu and Tamil, and between Indian and Englishman. Certainly the first-named was the most severe. The concerted antipathy toward the Brahman was inescapable, the subject not only of the most practical legal measures but also of the most ringing speeches, which by claiming a common Dravidian background for Telugus and Tamils effectively shut out the minority Brahmans. By the end of the Second Council the Brahmans were clearly on the defensive. The Justice Party, flushed with success, and sidetracked from its earlier social reform ideals by the leadership of Tyagaraja Chetti, Tanikachala Chetti, and the Rajah of Panagal, bound itself even more firmly to the interests of a narrow non-Brahman caste Hindu group whose social horizons were extremely limited. During its term of office the Justice Party did little to promote general religious or social reform. Aside from consolidating the position of the non-Brahman caste Hindu, its only other piece of legislation with an avowedly social reform bias—with the possible exception of the Hindu Religious Endowments Act—was the enfranchisement of women in 1921.[92]

Justice Organization in Decay

As often happens, success was a prelude to decline. The disunity within the Justice Party was revealed even as early as 1922, when the Tamils began to feel slighted on appointments to office in the Justice ministry. Even more disastrous, however, was the failure of the Rajah of Panagal and Tyagaraja Chetti to prevent whatever Justice organization there had been from falling into decay. The *Madras Mail*, which was becoming increasingly critical of Justice activity, pointed out this failure, and its probable causes, on the eve of the 1923 elections. On October 1, 1923, it noted that a speech of Ramaswami Mudaliar's was "more remarkable for its arrogant assertion of the permanency of the non-Brahmin Party's supremacy in the Council of this Presidency and the inference that since that supremacy is assured, the non-Brahmin

[92] *MLCP*, I B (Apr. 1, 1921), 1515.

Party can afford to ignore the electors." The *Mail* had commented in September on the singular lack of election bustle, either in the *mofussil* or in Madras city, though Ramaswami Mudaliar retorted that this was so because the Justice Party had no opponents "who were worthy of their steel."[93] The Swarajists did in fact contest the elections that year, but they were only able to place eleven candidates in the Council. On the other hand, the Justice Party found that its support had dwindled substantially. Either because of its lack of electioneering or because of the ineffectiveness of its local organizations, or both, it won only forty-four places in the 1923 Council elections as compared with sixty-three seats in 1920.[94] Only the appointment by the Government of Madras of seventeen additional Justice Party members (for a total of sixty-one) helped the party to maintain its strength in the new Council.[95]

Contrasted with the success of the 1920 win, the 1923 showing was ominous. Much had happened in the intervening years to narrow the support of the Justice Party. In the first Council, the Muslims had given valuable support, but they were alienated over the question of appointments. One Muslim member, Abbas Ali Khan, speaking in late 1923, said that the Muslims had originally joined the Justice Party because it had seemed most likely to preserve the interests not only of the non-Brahmans but also

[93] *Madras Mail*, Sept. 25 and Oct. 1, 1923.

[94] There were a few who campaigned vigorously. K. V. Reddi Naidu toured the Telugu area several times, speaking in Telugu. He chiefly sought to publicize the work of the Development Minister, including the departments of industries and agriculture, and the doctrines of the Justice Party. See *ibid.*, Oct. 10, 1923.

[95] *Memorandum Submitted to the Indian Statutory Commission by the Madras Government*, p. 17. The percentage of voters who went to the polls in 1923 was substantially higher than it was in 1920. In the first elections to the Reformed Councils, 24.19 percent voted, but in 1923 the figure rose to 36.2 percent, out of an electorate representing 3.0 percent of the total population. *Ibid.*, p. 18.

of south Indian Muslims. Therefore, "after a good deal of hesitation," the Muslims "joined forces with the Justice Party." Disillusion soon set in and as Abbas Ali Khan himself pointed out, "I have found out from actual experience that whenever the question of appointments came in they always preferred a Mudaliar [Vellala], a Nayudu [Balija], a Chettiyar or a Pillai [Vellala] but not a Muhammadan. (hear, hear)."[96] Many non-Brahman caste Hindus were alienated by the Rajah of Panagal's distribution of patronage, and this antagonism culminated in a no-confidence motion brought against the Justice ministry on November 28, 1923, by C. Ramalinga Reddi, the Madras University representative in the Council, and a Justice member during the first ministry. This resolution was defeated by a comfortable majority, but Ramalinga Reddi remained in opposition, along with his friend C. Natesa Mudaliar, who had also been irritated by the autocratic misuse of patronage powers by Tyagaraja Chetti and the Rajah of Panagal and, even more, by their arbitrary political favoritism when it came to supporting candidates.[97]

By late 1924, the Justice Party's fortunes both in and outside the Council were at a low ebb. The party was badly organized, its newspapers were no longer effective as propaganda media, its most able propagandists, such as J. S. Kannappar, J. N. Ramanathan from Madura, and Natesa Mudaliar—all Tamils—had been alienated by Tyagaraja Chetti's and Panagal's handling of af-

[96] *MLCP*, XV (Nov. 27, 1923), 50, 51. The "Vellala–Balija" orientation of the Justice Party was commonly referred to by Muslims in south India after 1923. Some truth in the accusation can be inferred from the efforts that many non-Brahmans in the party made to disassociate themselves from this image. See the remarks on this issue by K. V. Reddi Naidu, *Madras Mail*, Oct. 30, 1925.

[97] Kandaswami Chetti, for example, filed a suit of defamation against the Rajah of Panagal for a speech that Panagal made on October 1, 1922, criticizing Kandaswami Chetti's attitude toward the untouchables. *Hindu* (weekly ed.), Jan. 25, 1923.

fairs.[98] Rather late in the day, some Justicites began to turn their attention to these problems. The most perceptive advice came from K. V. Reddi Naidu, who had been dropped from the Justice ministry in 1923. In a letter to Tyagaraja Chetti in 1924, he discussed the problems of the Justice Party with a forcefulness and comprehensiveness that must have been rather upsetting to the seventy-two-year-old party leader. The letter, written in September and published the following month in the *Hindu*, was provoked by Tyagaraja Chetti's refusal to allow Reddi Naidu to speak freely at a Justice Party conference at which Reddi Naidu had been asked to preside.[99] In the letter, Reddi Naidu said that the Justice Party had been too absorbed in "either attacking our opponents the Brahmins or defending ourselves against their attacks. This time it is an occasion for searching of hearts for devising means to save the declining fortunes of an honourable party, struggling for existence and threatened with extinction." People had the impression, he went on, that the party had lost its original idealism, that it had fallen far short of its earlier promise. Communal representation should still be the central part of the Justice program, but "We must agree to be not merely passive and verbal supporters of Swaraj but active participators in all constitutional agitations to hasten its grant. . . . Something must be done to assure the public that we as a party stand for real democracy" and not merely for the ascendancy of *zamindars* and the aristocracy.

[98] Natesa Mudaliar, besides disliking Chetti's and Panagal's Telugu bias, also felt that the Justice ministers had not taken advantage of their position as government and party leaders to advance the cause of the poorer classes, particularly the untouchables. When pressed by a *Madras Mail* reporter to say why he was discontented, Natesa Mudaliar explained: "I still feel that a party like the non-Brahmin Party with such extraordinary power and numerical support at its back has not come up to the expectations of the people who sent its members to power and place." *Madras Mail*, May 31, 1923. See also *MLCP*, XVII (Mar. 6, 1924), 42.

[99] For the text of the letter, dated Sept. 27, 1924, see the *Hindu* (weekly ed.), Oct. 16, 1924.

Reddi Naidu further argued that if the party was to survive and prosper it needed to close its ranks, and that it should ask Natesa Mudaliar and others who had resigned in disgust to come back. "You will also admit," he wrote, "that though our party men are in office as ministers, they are not in power and that this is largely due to dissensions." Such division could be effectively eliminated, he thought, if the party were to draw up a constitution, which had been proposed in the past "whenever we were threatened with the cloud of crisis, but as often dropped when the cloud cleared away." Reddi Naidu also complained that the party no longer had any program of action and no policy, either to present to the electorate or to follow in the Legislative Council. He urged that intensive and serious efforts be made to start new branches of the party and to revive the old ones throughout the presidency.

One of Reddi Naidu's most interesting points was his recommendation that the Justice Party should take on a more national look. "We never cared," he wrote, "to send our representatives to the [Legislative] Assembly [in Delhi]. The Hon'ble Mr. C. P. Ramaswami Iyer will tell you in what esteem we are held in Simla." To attain a national outlook and status, he suggested that the party should "join the Congress for purposes requiring all-India united action . . . For my part I will not spin to join the Congress," but, he warned, "we are ignored now by the rest of India." That no representatives from the Justice party had been invited to the Unity Conference in Delhi in September, 1924, indicated to Reddi Naidu the degree of the non-Brahmans' isolation from all-India happenings. Two years ago, Reddi Naidu said, the organizers of the Unity Conference "would not have dared to ignore us in this fashion."

The *Madras Mail* had earlier noted the existence of numerous Nayudu conferences, Kamma confederations, and Vellala *sangams*, and had suggested that if the Justice Party members had

wanted to or were united enough they "could capture every elected seat in the Central Legislature [in Delhi] so overwhelming are their numbers. They failed, because they did not organise and work to capture the seats, and they failed to organise because they were riven with dissension."[100] Adopting the same line, the *Hindu* in mid-1924 predicted that if the Justice Party were to continue, it would have to seek all-India support.[101] Even Ramalinga Reddi told a group of Madras non-Brahmans, including the chairman A. B. Lathe, who headed the non-Brahman group in Bombay, that "Congress is not and does not profess to be an alliance of Brahmins. It is open to everybody. If you are suspicious of Brahmins you should become members of Congress and take its management into your own hands so as to leave no room for suspicion."[102]

In line with this sort of advice, several Justice leaders did try to do something to broaden the party's horizons. Ramaswami Mudaliar and B. Munuswami Naidu, a Telugu Kamma from Chittoor district and later Chief Minister of Madras (1930–1932), were ultimately sent as representatives to the Unity Conference in Bombay in November, 1924. But the only tangible benefit they derived from the conference was a meeting with A. N. Surve, who represented the Bombay non-Brahmans, and with whom they made preliminary arrangements for an all-India non-Brahman confederation to coincide with the Indian National Congress session scheduled for the last week of December, about a month later.[103]

The All-India Non-Brahman Congress duly convened in Bombay, in an atmosphere highly reminiscent of National Congress sessions. Ramaswami Mudaliar presided. Of all the speeches, his was particularly noteworthy for its description of the non-Brahman movement as a "jobocracy":

[100] *Madras Mail*, July 19, 1923, and May 19, 1924.
[101] *Hindu*, June 12, 1924.
[102] *Ibid.*, Nov. 13, 1924. [103] *Ibid.*, Nov. 23, 1924.

> I fully and frankly state that one of the objects we have in view is the securing of jobs to the men of our communities and I am not ashamed of calling myself a job-hunter. Yes, I am proud to be a job-hunter, only I hunt for jobs not for myself or my relations, nor for the ne'er do wells in my family circles, but I ask openly and demand that jobs should be available to the hundreds of young men fully trained and equipped, who are now forced to remain idle, because they have not the fortuitous aids of other communities.[104]

To prove that it was serious in its goal of bringing good to the entire nation, the Non-Brahman Congress passed a host of resolutions urging the support of indigenous industries, linguistic provinces, and village propaganda, and it approved a detailed program of constitutional reform, including provincial autonomy.

But in the end little came of this attempt to unite the forces of the non-Brahman movements of Madras and Bombay. The second and last effort was the All-India Non-Brahman Congress at Amaraoti, in late 1925, after the death of Tyagaraja Chetti, at which the Rajah of Panagal, now elevated to party leader, gave a tepid speech which did little more than review Justice legislative activity in Madras and offer a few suggestions on constitutional reform.[105] After the meeting, several members of the party, appalled at such indifference, decided to revamp the Justice program in Congress terms, even to include handspinning, which had earlier been anathema to most party members. A resolution had already been passed at a Justice Confederation early in 1925 urging "on the attention of the non-Brahmin public the paramount necessity of supporting all indigenous industries and the need for the encouraging of Swadeshi enterprise."[106] All this was

[104] *Ibid.* (weekly ed.), Jan. 1, 1925.

[105] *Ibid.* (weekly ed.), Dec. 31, 1925.

[106] *Ibid.*, Feb. 9, 1925. At the same confederation a committee was formed to look into the possibility of "bringing about unity between the various political parties working for Swaraj."

quite beyond Tyagaraja Chetti. At a Devanga caste conference, just two weeks before he died, he interrupted a talk on the virtues of handspinning and *khaddar* to say, "It is all humbug."[107]

Tyagaraja Chetti died on April 28, 1925—the last of the original leaders of the Justice Party. With his death, the party lost a leader who, though autocratic, was a strong cohesive force in an otherwise disintegrating group. But his overbearing way of putting down any man who seemed to be challenging his authority had kept new leaders from developing, and with him gone there was a vacuum in Justice leadership which was never really filled in the years that followed. It was true that the party was now free to move in a new direction, as it had after the death of Dr. Nair, but the intentions of those who had sought to turn the party into a more potent and useful political weapon were largely unfulfilled, for there was simply not enough drive, imagination, creative leadership, or organizational skill—certainly not enough to transform the party into a political organization that could compete effectively with the superior Swaraj tactics and appeal. Increasingly after 1925, the Justice Party came to be more and more on the defensive—always aware that it was losing the initiative of articulating non-Brahmanism and that the new leaders were the Tamil non-Brahmans who had been trained in the arts of political agitation while in the ranks of Congress.

Communalism and Congress

More or less concurrently with the death of Tyagaraja Chetti and the Justice Party's reappraisal of its position, the No-Changers in the Tamil Nad Congress and the Changers in the Swaraj Party inside and out of the Legislative Council found that they, too, had reached a turning point in policy and direction. As a result of decisions passed at the Cocanada Congress in December, 1923, Khaddar Boards had been set up in all the provinces; but this was

[107] *Ibid.*, Apr. 13, 1925.

not in itself, as the *Hindu* pointed out (Jan. 2, 1924), of "spectacular value," merely a restatement of the principles enunciated by Gandhi in the Bardoli program early in 1922. As we have seen, the Khaddar Boards had only a modicum of success in the Tamil districts, partly because of the general apathy toward the use of *khaddar* for symbolic and utilitarian purposes, partly because there was considerable rivalry between the Khaddar Sabhas of the Telugu and Tamil boards in the city of Madras itself. The Tamil Nad Provincial Congress Committee had other troubles. Many Congress members accused the committee of giving the individual Congress groups insufficient funds to carry on even the constructive program; other Congress members thought the constructive program lacked the excitement and urgency needed in political activity. S. Srinivasa Iyengar, who had resigned his seat in the Legislative Council in December, 1921, when government oppression of noncooperators began to trouble him, complained of this bitterly at a Congress meeting in Madras in June, 1924: "Mahatmaji's lesson was perfectly simple but the truth was that everybody did not use the charka and spin. When people did not do it, what was the use of again and again saying 'Spin, Spin.'"[105]

Gandhi was released from prison in early 1924 because of ill-health. One of his first public utterances was a demand that all members of the A.I.C.C. should be committed noncooperators eligible for office only on the basis of the amount that they spun. The crisis began to deepen. The *Hindu* (June 20, 1924) condemned the move in a long editorial entitled "The Mahatma's Ultimatum," which questioned the capacity of anyone, at that particular time, to move into the Indian political scene and to dismiss the activity of the Swaraj Party and the notion of Council entry. "The Swarajists are there and too substantially there," it wrote, "to be cursed or elbowed out of existence merely because they offend the no-changers' sense of proprieties." The only ques-

[105] *Ibid.*, June 20, 1924.

tion, therefore, was "whether this kind of cleansing contemplated by the Mahatmaji is politically wise or—a belittlingly mundane word—expedient. In other words could the purging of the Congress—for the Congress executives are to a large extent synonymous with the Congress—leave in it sufficient prestige to continue to command the respect in which it is now held."

By November, Gandhi, realizing that what the *Hindu* called his "ritualistic intolerance" was inappropriate to the changed circumstances of the India of 1924, had backed down. When the Bengal government clapped a number of Swaraj Party members into jail under the terms of what was later called the Bengal Ordinance, he came to a compromise agreement with C. R. Das and Motilal Nehru over the equal importance of *khaddar*-spinning and Council entry. And at the 1924 Belgaum Congress the following month, at which he presided, he explained that he had entered into an agreement with the Swarajists because he recognized the value of the Councils for the attainment of Swaraj.[109]

Gandhi's vacillations on the question of Council boycott were awkward for the No-Changers in the Tamil Nad Congress, men like Rajagopalachariar and three former members of the M.P.A., Tiru. Vi. Kaliyanasundaram Mudaliar, E. V. Ramaswami Naicker, and P. Varadarajulu Naidu. The T.N.C.C. which met shortly after the Belgaum Congress defeated a resolution to allow *all* members of Congress to contest municipal and other local elections—thereby reopening the quarrel that Gandhi was supposed to have settled.[110] Then, some nine months later, in September, 1925, after C. R. Das's death the previous June, Swarajists won three out of the four seats they contested in the Madras municipal elections.[111] It was a good demonstration of the appeal that Con-

[109] The story of these negotiations and their outcome is succinctly set out in B. R. Nanda, *Mahatma Gandhi: A Biography* (London, 1959), pp. 251–255.

[110] *Hindu* (weekly ed.), Jan. 22, 1925.

[111] *Ibid.*, Sept. 8, 1925.

gress could have for the electorate, but even so, Rajagopalachariar and his fellow No-Changers stuck to their 1920 boycott pledge.

All the while there remained the same difficulty in the No-Changer ranks that had originally provoked Dr. Nair and Tyagaraja Chetti to protest the Home Rule movement and Congress in 1916—namely, the resentment felt by many non-Brahmans toward what they considered excessive Brahman power within the Congress organization. Non-Brahman hostility toward Brahmans within the Tamil Nad Congress remained, despite the dissolution of the M.P.A. in mid-1920. How strong the hostility had become was only too apparent, first at a meeting of the Madras Provincial Congress Committee at Tinnevelly on June 24, 1920. At that meeting V. O. Chidambaram Pillai, a Tamil Vellala who was well known for his *swadeshi* activities earlier in the century, submitted a resolution proposing that Congress should adopt as a central axiom the need to obtain proportional representation for non-Brahmans in the public services and representative bodies of the presidency.[112] The resolution was in fact adopted, but only after it had been hedged about with a number of qualifications and after many reservations had been voiced as to its relevance. Shortly after this meeting a letter to the *Madras Mail* (June 30, 1920) from a reader who called himself a "non-Brahmin delegate" complained of the way in which the resolution had been handled by Brahmans at the conference: "The 'Nationalist' Brahmin may deem it devilishly clever of him to have postponed 'the evil day' when he will have to find his level in politics (as in everything else). But he is too clever by half. Keen and plastic as his intellect is, he is as foolish as an ostrich in some matters. The demoralisation of Indian politics is only a matter of time. If it has not come this year it will come the next year or the next."

An unwillingness to face the realities of the situation and a desire to put off the evil day when non-Brahmans in Congress

[112] *Madras Mail*, June 26, 1920.

politics would demand an equal if not a disproportionally large share of power was a characteristic of proceedings within the Tamil Congress organization for the next five years. On a number of occasions, resolutions dealing with social policy, particularly proportional representation, were brought before provincial and district Congress conferences in the Tamil area, and on each occasion the rebuff which non-Brahmans felt they had received provoked them to deeper hostility.[113] In due time this hostility spread to the question of appointments to positions of importance within the Tamil Congress organization. For example, when K. Santhanam, a Brahman who was a friend of Rajagopalachariar's, was appointed head of the Khaddar Board for Tamil Nad, Rajagopalachariar was accused by E. V. Ramaswami Naicker, a Balija Naidu, of appointing too many Brahmans.[114]

Ramaswami Naicker had previously shown his capacity for public agitation when he helped Rajagopalachariar to picket toddy-shops. In 1924, when a conflict arose over the right of untouchables to use certain roads outside a temple in Vykom in

[113] The *Hindu* (Nov. 7, 1922) described, for example, the quarrel that developed at a Congress meeting in Tiruppur on November 5, 1922, over a resolution to allow Nadars entry into the temples. At a T.N.C.C. meeting in April of the same year it was proposed that a committee be appointed "to investigate and recommend ways for the better understanding and relationship between Brahmins and non-Brahmins," but owing to the controversial nature of the proposal it was thought "inexpedient" to pass it and it was duly withdrawn. (*Hindu*, Apr. 10, 1922). Another quarrel between non-Brahmans and Brahmans arose when a resolution was introduced by a Brahman at the T.N.C.C. meeting at Tenkasi in Tinnevelly district on July 6, 1922, recommending that the A.I.C.C. should help to found and support a Tamil university at Kallidaikurchi. Two Vellalas opposed this resolution as likely to exacerbate the "ill-feeling between Brahmin and non-Brahmins in this district." At that point a delegate cried, "Mahatma Gandhiki jai." A. Masilamani Pillai, a Vellala, replied, "Brahmana-kurumbu [Brahman mischief]," following which "there were many angry demonstrations." *Ibid.*, July 8, 1922.

[114] Sitamparaṉār, *Tamiḻar talaivar* ["Tamilians' Leader"] (4th ed.; Erode, 1960), p. 95.

Travancore state, to the west of Madras, Ramaswami Naicker really came into his element. From the outset, the Travancore police authorities made it their policy to arrest only the Congress leaders who offered *satyagraha* in protest against the rule forbidding the untouchables to use the roads. At first, they arrested two Malayalis, K. P. Kesava Menon (a Nair, editor of *Mathurabhumi*) and T. K. Madhavan (a low-caste Ezhava, editor of the newspaper *Deshabhimani*); later they arrested George Joseph, an Indian Christian lawyer trained in England, on a charge of stirring up trouble. Ramaswami Naicker arrived in Vykom on April 13 and began to harangue his audiences. This won him a month in prison in Travancore. After his release he began the agitation again, and was again arrested, and this time got a six months' sentence (though he was released two months early). Finally, in 1925, after Rajagopalachariar, Varadarajulu Naidu, and Gandhi had all visited the locality, the prohibitory order was removed by the Travancore Durbar. But it was Ramaswami Naicker who got the most glory, and he returned to Madras as *Vaikkam vīrar*, the hero of Vykom, respected for his capacity to fight the injustices under which untouchables lived in Kerala and to stand up to authority.[115] His popularity after the Vykom *satyagraha* seemed secure.

Still another affair in which Ramaswami Naicker became involved was the issue of separate dining which was enforced for Brahman and non-Brahman students at a traditional school or Gurukulam in the famous Brahman village of Kallidaikurchi in Tinnevelly district. As a center of Brahman culture and learning Kallidaikurchi had a tradition of conflict with the non-Brahmans of the area dating back at least to 1917, when the Justice Party took exception to Taluq Board funds being spent on the Sanskrit College at Kallidaikurchi. Only a few non-Brahmans were permitted to enter the school, and they were not allowed to study the

[115] For this episode see *ibid.*, pp. 81–83.

Vedas.[116] The Gurukulam, which was actually at Shermadevi, a little to the south of Kallidaikurchi, was established in December, 1922, by V. V. S. Aiyer, a former terrorist and editor (1920–1922) of the Tamil newspaper *Desabhaktan.* Most of its financial support came from private individuals such as the Nattukottai Chettis in India and Burma, and from a number of organizations. The Tamil Nad Congress Committee gave Rs. 5,000 to the Gurukulam at the time of its establishment.

In January, 1925, reports that non-Brahmans at the Gurukulam were forced to eat apart from the Brahmans came to the attention of Ramaswami Naicker and P. Varadarajulu Naidu (both Balija Naidus). A committee from the T.N.C.C. was thereupon appointed to look into the matter,[117] and in April Varadarajulu Naidu began an all-out campaign not only against the Gurukulam but also against what he considered to be Brahman domination within the Congress.[118] He told a public audience at Salem that before the Tamils sought equality with foreigners they should "establish complete equality with the Brahmins in the matter of inter-dining and save the Non-Brahmins from the age-long social injustice that had been meted out to them by the Brahmins . . . V. V. S. Ayyar's action in not allowing Non-Brahmin boys to eat with the Brahmins [was] a direct challenge to the Non-Brahmins, and . . . this was the time for the Tamilians to vindicate their honour."[119] Two weeks later Varadarajulu Naidu indirectly caused a minor riot when he spoke at a meeting in Mayavaram, in Tan-

[116] See T. Varadarajulu Naidu, *Justice Movement, 1917*, pp. 114–115, and the *Madras Mail*, Mar. 30, 1918, which gives the full text of the resolution passed by the non-Brahmans. Specifically, the resolution protested the diversion by the Taluq Board of Shermadevi of the Tirucarankudi Chattram funds toward the maintenance of the Sanskrit College at Kallidaikurchi on the grounds that this introduced an invidious distinction of caste.

[117] *Hindu* (weekly ed.), Jan. 22, 1925.

[118] See Varadarajulu Naidu's editorial in *Tamil Nadu* for Mar. 29, 1925, which attacks the Brahmans on the Gurukulam issue. *Madras NNR, 1925.*

[119] *Hindu*, Apr. 8, 1925.

jore district. While the meeting was in progress a rumor was circulated that a Brahman who had been heckling Varadarajulu Naidu during his speech had been forcibly ejected by some non-Brahmans. The ensuing melee was so wild that the meeting broke up in confusion.[120] When the T.N.C.C. met at Trichinopoly, Varadarajulu Naidu used his influence as president to limit the agenda almost exclusively to a discussion of the Brahman–non-Brahman question. In the event, a compromise resolution was agreed on by which the Committee recommended that all organizations partaking in the national movement should follow a principle shunning gradations of merit based on birth.[121] Ramaswami Naicker agreed with the resolution, adding that if the country was not yet prepared to accept this state of things, it was the duty of the non-Brahmans to create public opinion which was receptive to their rights.

Almost simultaneously, as a direct result of non-Brahman pressure, V. V. S. Aiyer resigned as head of the Gurukulam.[122] Even with this victory, Varadarajulu Naidu thought seriously of leaving Congress as a protest against Brahmans in the Tamil Nad organization. A non-Brahman lawyer more or less summed up the feeling when he wrote to the *Hindu* (Apr. 19, 1925): "Mahatama Gandhi wanted this year to be a 'spinning year,' but Dr. Naidu is making it a 'non-Brahman year.'"

Before the year was out events were to prove that it was most certainly more a non-Brahman year than anyone could have suspected. With the Gurukulam controversy still alive and with other Brahman–non-Brahman conflicts brewing, Ramaswami Naicker came to the T.N.C.C. conference at Conjeevaram in November, 1925, ready for a showdown with the Brahmans. Earlier in the month (Nov. 3, 1925) in his new Tamil-language

[120] *Ibid.*, Apr. 22, 1925.

[121] *Ibid.* (weekly ed.), Apr. 23, 1925.

[122] *Ibid.* A little more than a month later, on June 3, he was drowned; *ibid.*, June 5, 1925.

paper *Kudi Arasu* he had warned the "popular representatives" going to the Conjeevaram conference not to be caught in the "hands of the treacherous and selfish class of persons who deceive the public by their machinations, entangle them in their wily snares and turn everything to their advantage by standing in the forefront in every matter." After the conference had convened, he submitted two resolutions, both recommending that Congress recognize the principle of communal representation for non-Brahmans in the public services and representative bodies—the same ideas accepted in 1917 by the M.P.A. and in 1920 by the M.P.C.C. in the resolution of V. O. Chidambaram Pillai. Both resolutions were disallowed by the chairman, Tiru. Vi. Kaliyanasundaram Mudaliar, on the grounds that one had already been rejected by the Subjects Committee. At this point Ramaswami Naicker and several other non-Brahmans in the conference walked out.

An hour after the walk-out, almost all the non-Brahmans attending the conference met again under the presidency of T. A. Ramalingam Chetti, who had broken with the Justice Party in 1921, and had remained independent politically, and began to discuss a resolution that summarized the two rejected resolutions. Varadarajulu Naidu urged moderation: "If we pass this resolution, it is nothing short of our committing political suicide!"[123] Ramaswami Naicker took a militant stand: "To say that there is no division between Brahmin and non-Brahmin is like binding up a wound without healing it."[124] Moderation prevailed. Ramaswami Naicker lingered on in Congress for a month more, acting as a member of the Khaddar Board, but he left that when he found that Gandhi kept interfering in its affairs.[125] And by the end of 1925 Ramaswami Naicker, the most successful Tamil

[123] *Ibid.*, Nov. 23, 1925.
[124] Sitamparaṉār, *Tamiḻar talaivar*, p. 94.
[125] *Ibid.*, p. 95.

propagandist among the No-Changers in the Tamil Nad Congress, had left to form an organization of his own.

Thus, despite the Congress boycott, the formation of the Swaraj Party in 1923 soon involved not only the Changers but also the No-Changers in the many social and administrative problems of Madras presidency. By 1925, the problems that had originally prompted the formation of the Justice Party forced themselves on the attention of Congress members such as K. Santhanam, M. K. Acharya, and Rajagopalachariar—all Brahman No-Changers—with their realization that in the Tamil Nad Congress ranks many non-Brahmans were no longer willing to submit to what they considered to be Brahman dominance.

On the other hand, the Justice Party, with its success in the Legislative Council, its enactment of the Andhra University Act and the Hindu Religious Endowments Act, and most of all its victory in pressuring the government into giving the non-Brahman a solid position in the administrative machinery of the presidency, had achieved many of its original aims. But with the death of Tyagaraja Chetti the party lost much of the cohesion that it had possessed in 1921–1922, and by 1925 it was all too evident that its political orientation was narrow and its organization flimsy. It is true to say that the Justice Party was to some extent a victim of the system of government that it had agreed to operate under the Reforms. The dyarchical system imposed by the Montagu–Chelmsford Reforms stultified the political acumen and apparatus of the Justice Party, and its victory in the uncontested 1920 elections was all too easy. With no opposition in the Council, complacency, disunion, and disaffection were predictable results.

It should be said that the difficulties not only of the Justice Party since its inception but also of the Congress in 1925 stemmed from the social system itself, in which the Brahmans had so long easily dominated the other caste groups. The difficulties also stemmed from the great controversy that paralleled political devel-

opments in the presidency — the controversy about the origin of the Dravidians and the nature of Dravidian culture. The Justice Party's commitment to Dravidian culture had originally separated it from the nationalist movement, and it was to Dravidianism that Varadarajulu Naidu and Ramaswami Naicker appealed within the Congress in 1925 as a means of uniting the Tamilians against the so-called Aryan Brahman domination. There was, in fact, little difference between the appeals of Varadarajulu Naidu and Ramaswami Naicker in Congress in 1925 and those of the Justice Party in 1917. Social problems peculiar to Tamil Nad had finally caught up with Congress and caused the same absorption with provincial affairs that characterized the outlook of the Justice Party.

Chapter 8

THE INTELLECTUAL BACKGROUND OF TAMIL SEPARATISM

Today the term Dravidian usually refers to a family of languages in south India, the main ones of which are Tamil, Telugu, Kannada, and Malayalam. In the first and second decades of the twentieth century, the term—in south India at least—had both a racial and a linguistic meaning. For example, K. V. Reddi Naidu, a Telugu non-Brahman, speaking in support of the Andhra University Bill, appealed to Dravidians—that is, not simply to those who spoke a Dravidian language but to those who claimed to possess a common racial heritage to unite them against the so-called Aryan invaders from the north, the south Indian Brahmans. Reddi Naidu, however, was something of an exception, for the Telugus, even in the Justice Party, did not often speak in these racial terms. In its racial sense, Dravidianism, at a very early stage, was identified with Tamil-speakers, since Tamil was considered to be the most ancient of the Dravidian languages spoken in modern India. Telugus were seldom so eager to claim Dravidian status, because Telugu, unlike Tamil, contained a great many Sanskrit words, which tended to diminish claims that Telugu was a culture independent of so-called Aryan influence. Partly also, the Telugu area did not exhibit the same polarities between Brahman and non-Brahman, such as between the Kapus and the Kammas on one side and the Brahmans on the other, as compared with the feelings of competition and hostility between the Vellalas and the Tamil Brahmans. For these reasons, although

non-Brahmans from all the main Dravidian language groups of south India joined the non-Brahman movement, the use of Dravidianism as a political weapon was gradually confined to the non-Brahmans in Tamil Nad.

Unearthing the Tamil Past

As in the cultural discovery of so many other regions of India, the Christian missionaries were the first to show an interest in Tamil culture, and to study the Tamil language. Late in the sixteenth century, in the wake of the Portuguese conquest of the western part of south India, now called Kerala, Jesuit missionaries began to establish schools and to make converts. The Fishery Coast—the area of the Tamil country now formed by Tinnevelly, Ramnad, and Tanjore districts—was also penetrated, and later Madura itself was used as a center for missionary activity. Roberto Di Nobili (1577–1656), the first in a series of remarkable Jesuit missionaries, made Madura his home for some time and was probably the first European to learn both Tamil and Sanskrit.[1] But it was Constantius Beschi (1680–1743) who epitomized the quality and direction of missionary linguistic enterprise in the Tamil area.[2] Beschi, though he knew Sanskrit, did not introduce Sanskrit expressions into his compositions as did Di Nobili, and was much more a master of Tamil. Besides a long poem in honor of St. Joseph, his Tamil compositions included a series of Tamil grammars and numerous polemic pamphlets denouncing the work of the Lutherans who were stationed in nearby Tranquebar. His work in Tamil grammar was especially important in that he was the first European to describe the traditional division between what are known as the chaste and the vulgar or colloquial styles of Tamil. Owing to his grammatical studies and his knowledge of the classics of Tamil grammar and literature, he became

[1] A life of Di Nobili is to be found in Vincent Cronin, *Pearl to India* (New York, 1959).

[2] See J. Bertrand, *La Mission du Maduré* (Paris, 1854), IV, 362–365.

well known among Tamil scholars and English scholars of Tamil in the nineteenth century, and it was largely his groundwork that encouraged later scholars to pursue the laborious task of explicating Tamil culture.[3] In the late 1920's Dravidianist politicians often referred to him as an example of a European who had been so impressed by the sophistication of the Tamil language as to make the great efforts necessary to master it.

More important for twentieth-century politics than either the work of Di Nobili or Beschi was that of the Rev. Robert Caldwell (1819–1891), a Scottish missionary from the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel. Caldwell had little formal education, but he applied himself to the study first of Tamil and later of Telugu and the other Dravidian languages, and within a decade of his arrival in India he was known in Madras circles as a man of some authority in matters of Indian history, culture, and ethnology.[4] At an early stage in his missionary career, Caldwell became interested in a toddy-tapping caste group known as the Shanars (today called Nadars), and in 1849 he published a book entitled *The Tinnevelly Shanars*. It earned him considerable repute, but annoyed the English-educated Shanars, who disliked his ascribing a non-Aryan origin to their group.[5] Some twenty years after the

[3] The first extended biography of Beschi in English appeared in the work of a fellow scholar of Tamil. See Robert Caldwell, *A Political and General History of the District of Tinnevelly* (Madras, 1881), pp. 240–243. Thomas Srinivasan's article, "Beschi, the Tamil Scholar and Poet," *Tamil Culture*, III (September, 1954), 297–313, based on all other sources, is an attempt to analyze Beschi's contribution to the cause of Tamil scholarship.

[4] The most useful and interesting short biography of Caldwell is in Tamil and is now a college textbook at Madras University: Ra. Pi. Sētupiḷḷai, *Kāltuvel Aiyar saritam* ["Biography of Caldwell"] (Tirunelveli, 1936). See also Caldwell's *Reminiscences*, ed. J. L. Wyatt (Madras, 1894).

[5] Commenting on the Shanars' propensity to better their own position, Caldwell wrote, "There was one peculiarity of the Shanars which I found as time went on of great advantage to them. I found them constantly endeavoring to improve themselves and make progress, both intellectually and in social position." Caldwell, *Reminiscences*, p. 85.

publication of the book agitation against it was started. There was great controversy, and some riots occurred, and the book was withdrawn from circulation. In 1881 Caldwell published a long history of Tinnevelly which was subsidized by the Madras government. His most celebrated work, however, which was to be discussed well into the next century, was *A Comparative Grammar of the Dravidian or South-Indian Family of Languages*, first published in 1856. This was the first attempt at a detailed philological analysis of the interrelations of the Dravidian languages.

In his *Grammar* Caldwell did not merely analyze the linguistic affinities of the Dravidian languages; he also formulated certain theories about the origins and nature of Tamil Dravidian culture, which he suggested reached to antiquity, perhaps to the time of Christ. In the Introduction he set out his ideas on the characteristics of Dravidian culture. It was this outline that later provided valuable ammunition for those who sought to prove the antiquity and purity of Tamil. Among other things, Caldwell denied that the Dravidian languages were derived from Sanskrit, as some, including the noted scholar H. H. Wilson, has suggested. On the contrary, he contended that "Sanskrit has not disdained to borrow . . . from its Dravidian neighbours."[6] Tamil, he said, the "most highly cultivated *ab intra* of all Dravidian idioms, can dispense with its Sanskrit, if need be, and not only stand alone, but flourish, without its aid."[7] He pointed out that hostility toward Sanskrit had so far pervaded the minds of educated Tamilians that "a Tamil poetical composition is regarded as in accordance with good taste and worthy of being called classical, not in proportion to the amount of Sanskrit it contains, as would be the case in some other dialects, but in proportion to its freedom from

[6] Robert Caldwell, *A Comparative Grammar of the Dravidian or South-Indian Family of Languages* (2d ed. rev.; London, 1875), p. 46. All references are to this edition.

[7] *Ibid.*, p. 49.

Sanskrit."[8] Caldwell's theory was that Sanskrit had been brought to south India originally by Aryan Brahman colonists, and with it a peculiar type of Hinduism, which embodied the worship of idols: "There is only one [idea or word] which could not be expressed with faultless propriety and poetic elegance in equivalents of pure Dravidian origin. That word is 'image!' Both word and thing are foreign to primitive Tamil usages and habits of thought, and were introduced into the Tamil country by the Brahmans with the Puranic system of religion and worship of idols."[9] The Brahmans, he noted, had written nothing "worthy of preservation" in Tamil.[10] The language had been cultivated by "native Tamilians," called Sudras by the Brahmans, even though they had been Dravidian chieftains, soldiers, and cultivators, never conquered by the Brahmans.[11] Indeed, the term Sudra should be dropped because its usage was associated with Brahmans and "those Europeans who take their nomenclature from Brahmans,"[12] and instead the name of each "Dravidian caste," according to the locality, should be used. Most of all, however, Caldwell, with great skill and understanding, showed that Tamil literature—which was only partly known to him—possessed great sophistication both in its manner of expression and in the ideas that it conveyed.

Another missionary, G. U. Pope (1820–1907), also contributed much to the elevation of Tamil studies and Tamil religion as legitimate subjects of study for Oriental scholars.[13] Like Caldwell, Pope belonged to the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel,

[8] *Ibid.*

[9] *Ibid.*, pp. 2, 51.

[10] *Ibid.*, p. 51; see also p. 49.

[11] *Ibid.*, 116–117.

[12] *Ibid.*, p. 111.

[13] An outline of Pope's life and work can be found in M. S. Purnalingam Pillai, *Tamil Literature* (Munnirpallam, 1929), pp. 349–350. See also Caldwell's account of Pope in his *Reminiscences*, pp. 58–59.

and during his many years in India he prepared a number of Tamil dictionaries and grammars. His most valuable and interesting work was a translation of the *Tiruvasakam*, a long religious poem which is part of the canon of the Saiva Siddhanta religious system in the Tamil area.[14] Pope greatly enhanced the arguments in favor of the antiquity and sophistication of Tamil culture by placing the Saiva Siddhanta religious system in a high position among world religions, "the choicest product of the Dravidian intellect."[15]

Early British officials were seldom interested in Tamil literature, but they did on occasion help to elevate the cultural position of non-Brahmans. Perhaps the most unusual of the British officials in this way was J. H. Nelson, a person of some intelligence and insight into south Indian affairs.[16] Although he was primarily interested in law and legal institutions, he wrote the government manual for Madura district, entitled *The Madura Country* (1868), in which, like Caldwell, he suggested more than once that the non-Brahman's position, by virtue of his literary and cultural achievements, was superior to that of the Brahman. He also echoed Caldwell's argument that neither the Vellalas nor the other non-Brahmans of south India should be called Sudras because this was a term that had been forced upon them by Brahmans from the north.[17]

On one occasion even the Governor of Madras entered into the argument about Dravidian origins and rights. In 1886, in a remarkable address to the graduates of the University of Madras, the Governor, Mountstuart Elphinstone Grant-Duff, with a brazenness that must have shaken his listeners, three-quarters of

[14] G. U. Pope (trans. and ed.), *The Tiruvācagam* (Oxford, 1900).

[15] Quoted in Purnalingam Pillai, *Tamil Literature*, pp. 242–243.

[16] For an excellent analysis of Nelson's work see J. D. M. Derrett, "J. H. Nelson, the Forgotten Administrator-Historian of South India," in C. H. Philips (ed.), *Historians of India, Pakistan and Ceylon*, pp. 354–372.

[17] *The Madura Country: A Manual*, pp. 12–13.

whom were Brahmans, delivered a sustained attack on the Brahmans of south India as the usurpers of social and literary superiority. He singled out the non-Brahmans in the audience: "You are of pure Dravidian race," he said, and "I should like to see the pre-Sanskrit element amongst you asserting itself rather more," and a greater emphasis placed on Dravidian literature:

> The constant putting forward of Sanskrit literature as if it were pre-eminently Indian, should stir the national pride of some of you Tamil, Telugu, Cannarese. You have less to do with Sanskrit than we English have. Ruffianly Europeans have sometimes been known to speak of natives of India as 'Niggers,' but they did not, like the proud speakers or writers of Sanskrit, speak of the people of the South as legions of monkeys. It was these Sanskrit speakers, not Europeans, who lumped up the Southern races as Rakshusas — demons. It was they who deliberately grounded all social distinctions on Varna, Colour.[18]

Though some of the British interest in the origins of Tamil culture in the nineteenth century seemed intended mainly to provoke, it did on the whole, and especially the work of Caldwell and Pope, stimulate Tamilians to take an interest in their own culture. A number of Tamil Associations or *sangams* were established, the most famous of which was at Madura under the patronage of Pandi Thorai Thevar, Zamindar of Palavanatham. In 1903 the association began to publish a journal called *Sen Tamil* for the purpose of giving direction to a number of scholarly efforts connected with Tamil literature, and it also sponsored the publication of a large number of Tamil classics under the general editorship of V. Swaminatha Iyer, a Smartha Brahman. Following the pattern set by the Madura Tamil Sangam, other Tamil Associations took form in urban areas throughout the Tamil-speaking

[18] M. E. Grant-Duff, *An Address Delivered to the Graduates of the University of Madras, 25th March, 1886* (Madras, 1886), pp. 29–30, 39, 40. I owe this reference to Professor Stephen N. Hay.

area. One was founded in Madras in 1907 by two Tamil Vellalas, T. Ramakrishna Pillai (who helped to edit and revise the third edition of Caldwell's *Comparative Grammar*) and C. R. Namasivaiya Mudaliar; the object of this *sangam* was to "encourage the study of Tamil classics and to bring the Tamil language so as to fit it to modern times."[19] Its membership, like that of the Madura Tamil Sangam, included both Brahmans and non-Brahmans.

These associations were successful in stimulating a resurgence of interest in Tamil literature, particularly in one of the major Tamil epics, the *Silappatikaram*, and in a Tamil grammar analogous to that of Panini's *Astadhayi*, the *Tolkappiyam*. Coincidental with this interest in Tamil literature and language was the beginning of a search into the Tamil past to discover who was responsible for its creation and for its downfall. A logical extension of the theories first outlined by Caldwell was that Tamil culture had a separate and independent existence before the Brahmans invaded south India. It was but a step further to a questioning of the Brahman position in modern south India as being inimical to what were thought to be the true interests of the Dravidians. In the last decade of the nineteenth century these beliefs became a familiar topic among many of the educated non-Brahmans in the Tamil area.

Professor P. Sundaram Pillai (1855–1897) was perhaps the first Tamilian to propagate the ideas concerning the antiquity and cultural self-sufficiency of the Dravidians. Some of his theories are set out in a book entitled *Milestones in the History of Tamil Literature*, but he also wrote a remarkable essay in the *Madras Standard* (1897) called "The Basic Element in Hindu Civilization," in which he elaborated his view that south India, and particularly the Tamil area, was culturally self-sufficient and could be independent of the arts and philosophy of Sanskrit and

[19] *New India*, Aug. 18, 1916.

the north. "India south of the Vindhyas, the Peninsular India, still continues to be India proper," he wrote.[20] In a private letter to a friend, J. M. Nallaswami Pillai, a fellow Tamil Vellala who edited a magazine on Saiva Siddhanta, Sundaram Pillai expanded his idea: "Most of what is ignorantly called Aryan Philosophy, Aryan Civilization is literally Dravidian or Tamilian at bottom."[21] Sundaram Pillai's most controversial theory, however, appeared posthumously in a brief article written by another Tamil Vellala friend, T. Ponemballen Pillai, in the *Malabar Quarterly Review*. In this article Ponemballem Pillai summarized Sundaram Pillai's ideas on the authenticity and interpretation of the Sanskrit version of the *Ramayana*. Sundaram Pillai evidently regarded it as a biased literary work, written in order to "proclaim the prowess of the Aryans and to represent their rivals and enemies the Dravidians, who had attained a high degree of civilization at that period, in the worst possible colour." The *rakshasas*, according to Ponemballem Pillai, though identified with the Dravidians, had never in fact existed but had been created by the Aryans so that "the Dravidians might look small in the eyes of posterity."[22] Ponemballem Pillai had his own explanation of Ravana's conduct. Since the Dravidians were at war with the Aryans, Ravana was perfectly justified in imprisoning the celestials, who were not descended from heaven but were "kith and kin of the Aryan trespassers." The sages whom Ravana molested were not holy; they "collected and communicated intelligence regarding the movements of the Dravidians to the enemies of the country." And as the victorious general, Ravana had every right to abduct

[20] *Madras Standard*, Jan. 30, 1897, quoted in J. M. Nallaswami Pillai, "Ancient Tamil Civilization," *The Light of Truth; or Siddhanta Deepika*, II, No. 5 (October, 1898), 113.

[21] Letter from P. Sundaram Pillai to J. M. Nallaswami Pillai, dated Dec. 19, 1896, quoted in *ibid*., p. 112.

[22] T. Ponemballem Pillai, "The Morality of the Ramayana," *Malabar Quarterly Review*, VIII, No. 2 (June, 1909), p. 83.

Rama's wife, Sita—indeed, he could have killed her had he so chosen. Furthermore, if Ravana then was a heroic figure, Rama was cowardly and unmanly, because he shot Bali dead from a place of concealment rather than facing him in "fair open fight which was the Dharma of the Kshatriyas according to Aryan ideas." This last interpretation (not particularly a new one)[23] implies the triumph of the manly and virile Dravidian over Rama, the flaccid and effete Aryan.[24]

This theory of Sundaram Pillai and Ponemballem Pillai closely accorded with the belief held by most educated people in south India that there was an Aryan invasion, which was represented by the gradual progress of the sage Agastiya southward and his gradual Aryanization of the peninsula. Some proof of this was said to lie in the fact that the Tamil word for Sanskrit, traditionally associated with the "Aryan" Brahmans, is *vaṭa moḻi*, or "northern language," in contrast to the word for Tamil, which is *ten moḻi*, or "southern language."[25] The enunciation of these theories together with the questioning of the traditional interpretation of the *Ramayana* marked the beginning of a long and still continuing debate.

But at the turn of the century few scholars were as forthright as Sundaram Pillai. Most of them were absorbed in the arduous process of delineating what they considered to be ancient Dravidian civilization. V. Kanakasabhai Pillai, the author of *The Tamils*

[23] Michael Madhusudhan Dutt, in his *Meghnad Vadh*, which he wrote in Bengali after a visit to Madras, has the same theme.

[24] See also the proceedings of the Saiva Siddhanta Conference at Tinnevelly, *New India*, June 24, 1915; the proceedings of the seventh session of the Saiva Siddhanta Sabha Conference in Tinnevelly on July 23, 1920, *Madras Mail*, July 26, 1920; and the letter to *ibid.*, Sept. 8, 1917.

[25] In 1898, J. M. Nallaswami Pillai wrote: "The oldest Tamil writers spoke of 'vada mori' and 'ten mori' and 'Aryan and Tamil,' and to them it did not seem to have occurred that any other language could stand in comparison much less in opposition to these two." "Ancient Tamil Civilization," p. 109.

1800 Years Ago (1904), believed that Dravidian civilization as represented by its literature was sophisticated and fully developed even at the time of Christ or shortly thereafter.[26] Another Tamil Vellala, S. Somasundara Bharati, later to play an important role in demanding the sole use of Tamil in Congress political meetings in the Tamil area, wrote a pamphlet entitled *Tamil Classics and Tamilakam* (1912), in which he dated the beginnings of Tamil Dravidian civilization at the sixth or seventh century B.C. Echoing an idea first given currency by Caldwell and then by Sundaram Pillai, Somasundara Bharati argued that Dravidian civilization owed nothing to Aryan culture, but rather gave the Aryans a ready-made civilization: "The special features, idiosyncracies and peculiar genius of Tamil literature so much attracted the Aryan scholars and kings; the almost primitive innocence and natural morality that characterised the Tamil people so far interested them, that they seriously set about studying the Tamils and their country."[27]

C. Subramania Bharati (1882–1921), the most famous of modern Tamil poets, was unwilling to enter into the Aryan-Dravidian controversy, but by writing in Tamil, and showing a profound love of the Tamil country, he gave a dimension and stature to Tamil literature and culture that was quite as important as scholarly defenses. Many of his poems, some originally composed as songs, have great lyric quality. Bharati was a Smartha Brahman, but he was extremely liberal in his views and never hesitated to criticize the maintenance of a caste system which

[26] V. Kanakasabhai Pillai, *The Tamils 1800 Years Ago* (2d ed.; Tirunelveli, 1956). Kanakasabhai Pillai died in 1906. In 1922, the Justice Party member and Catholic layman, L. D. Swamikannu Pillai, while in Europe discussed the findings of this book with the famous German philologist, Hermann Jacobi. Leone Prospero, S.J., *L. D. Swamikannu Pillai: A Biographical Study* (Mangalore, 1931), p. 101.

[27] S. Somasundara Bharati, *Tamil Classics and Tamilakam* (Tuticorin, 1912), p. 20. Tamilakam means "the area inhabited by Tamils."

had outlasted its usefulness and tended to produce only inequality and bitterness.[28]

Bharati was born in Ettiyapuram, in Tinnevelly district—the district with which Beschi and Caldwell had also had intimate connections. His first job after a mediocre high school career[29] was on the staff of a local *zamindar* who was charmed by his talent for composing spontaneous verses in Tamil. After his marriage, he worked variously in Benares, Allahabad, and Madura, as an instructor in Tamil, and in 1904 he went to Madras to become a translator for the Tamil-language daily *Swadeshimitran*.[30] It was during the next four years that he became interested in politics and social reform. He attended the Congress sessions in 1906 and 1907. He also began two journals of his own—*India*, in Tamil, and *Bala Bharata or Young India*, in English—and he began to write and publish poetry under the patronage of V. Krishnaswami Iyer, a Brahman member of the High Court and later of the Madras Executive Council.

Fearing that his terrorist associations might provoke his arrest, Bharati closed down *India* in 1910 and moved to the French enclave of Pondicherry. He stayed there for a little over ten years,

28 See his letter to the editor of *New India*, Mar. 12, 1915. In a later contribution to this same journal (May 11, 1915), Bharati wrote, "It would pain me and, of course, it would pain others, if I should treat fully of all the makeshifts and devices whereby the Brahmanas of today attempt to preserve their totally undeserved claim for 'spiritual superiority.' Now that India is really awakening to a New Age, it will be well for my Brahmana countrymen if they voluntarily relinquish all their old pretensions together with the silly and anti-national customs based on such pretensions, and lead the way for the establishment of liberty, equality and fraternity among the Indians."

29 P. Mahadevan, *Subramania Bharati: Patriot and Poet* (Madras, 1957), pp. 12–14.

30 The paper was a weekly for some nineteen years. In August, 1899, it became the first Tamil or vernacular daily in south India. The editor, G. Subramania Iyer, was extraordinarily hard pressed to find a competent editorial staff for his new enterprise, and Subramania Bharati was one of his recruits.

joined by Sri Aurobindo and V. V. S. Aiyer. Bharati occasionally contributed both prose and poetry (in English) to Annie Besant's journal *New India*,[31] but most of his time in Pondicherry seems to have been devoted to Tamil works, including numerous short poems and several long verse compositions. He also translated a history of the Indian National Congress into Tamil.

The important point about his Tamil poems is their expression of feelings of patriotism, not only for India but especially for *Tamil̲ nāṭu* or the Tamil country, and for the Tamil language. Bharati was immensely proud of his Tamil heritage. In one essay which appeared in *New India* (Mar. 5, 1915) he said: "The Tamil language, for instance, has a LIVING philosophical and poetical literature that is far grander, to my mind, than that of the "vernacular" of England . . . I do not think any modern vernacular of Europe can boast of works like the Kural of [Tiru] Valluvar, the Ramayana of Kamban, and the Silapadikaram (Anklet Epic) of Ilango."[32] In the poems entitled "Sentamil̲ nāṭu" ("Country of Pure Tamil"), "Tamil̲t tāy" ("Mother Tamil"), and "Tamil̲mol̲i vāl̲ttu" ("Praise of Tamil") Bharati expressed his ideas about Tamil as a language; but like the many classical poets of Tamil he also defined the physical and cultural boundaries of the Tamil country and conjured up the past of the three great Tamil Sangams in Madura. To Bharati, therefore, belongs the credit for transmuting vague feelings of Tamil patriotism into lyric expression. Bharati died at the age of thirty-nine as the result of an accident, still relatively unknown.[33]

After Bharati's death his name and works began to reach a wider public, in part, ironically, because the government in 1923

[31] An English translation of "Krishna My Mother" appeared in *New India*, June 26, 1915.

[32] He expressed the same sentiments in his poem "Tamil̲," in *Pāratiyār kavitaikal̲* ["Poems of Bharati"] (Madras, 1960), p. 11.

[33] See Tiru. Vi. Kaliyanasundaram Mudaliar's editorial in *Deshabaktan*, Feb. 25, 1920 (*Madras NNR, 1920*), seeking to popularize Bharati's work. Bharati died September 11, 1921.

prohibited his works to be used in the schools of the Tinnevelly Taluq Board. The prohibition was condemned in many quarters, including the Madras Legislative Council, where it was brought up by S. Satyamurti, a Smartha Brahman like Bharati himself.[34] In the same year a *Desabhakta Samaj* (Patriotic Association) was formed to popularize Bharati's songs through *bhajanas* (devotional songs), lectures, and pamphlets.[35] The ban on Bharati's works lasted for six years. In 1928 an anonymous Tamil scholar, in a letter to the *Hindu* (weekly ed., Sept. 20), deplored the fact that "the younger generation at school is denied access to Bharati by the fiat of the British Government as well as by the indifference of the Tamil scholars and pundits." English-educated Tamilians, he said, were more satisfied with a knowledge of Milton or Shakespeare or even the poems of Bengalis. "If at any time they feel inclined to read any indigenous poet, they will go in for the English poems of Sarojini [Naidu] and Chattopadyaya, Toru and Tagore, and not for the Tamil songs of Bharati." But the following year the ban was finally lifted and Bharati's works were soon available to the general public at attractive prices.[36]

Unlike many of his contemporaries, Bharati, who had above all helped to foster a feeling of cultural self-consciousness among Tamils, was nonsectarian in his approach to Tamil culture; both Brahman and non-Brahman Tamils were entitled to their Tamil heritage. But his delineation of Tamil Nad as a physical and cultural entity as well as the cultural hypotheses of Sundaram Pillai and Ponemballem Pillai could be used for political purposes in

[34] See the *Hindu*, May 14, 1923; also editorials in *Samarsa Bodhini* (Aug. 2, 1923), *Lokapari* (May 17, 1923), *Nava Sakti* (May 18, 1923), and *Swarajya* (July 31, 1923), all in *Madras NNR, 1923*. See also *MLCP*, IV (Nov. 27, 1923), 63.

[35] *Lokapari*, Aug. 23, 1923 (*Madras NNR, 1923*).

[36] See the letter of Satyamurti on the duty of Tamilians to celebrate the lifting of the ban, and to read and buy Bharati's works, *Hindu*, Jan. 18, 1929; also see *ibid.*, Feb. 16, 1929.

the Brahman–non-Brahman struggle for political and administrative power.

The Justice Party and Tamil Culture

The formulation of the concept of Dravidian civilization quickly became involved not only with a full-scale attack on the Brahman's cultural position but also with political issues. Members of both the Justice Party and the Madras Presidency Association rapidly absorbed the prevailing cultural theories about Dravidian antiquity and made them part of their program; the Justice Party in particular held as part of its fundamental ideology the theory that non-Brahmans were Dravidians and as such were distinct from the so-called Aryan Brahmans. P. Tyagaraja Chetti, addressing the first Justice Party Confederation in Madras in late 1917, said, "The genius of Dravidian civilization does not recognize the difference between man and man by birth. The leaders of Dravidian thought, Thiruvalluvar, Avvai, Cumbar, do not claim to be born from the brain of the God-head. . . . It is the Aryans who have introduced this birth distinction, which they have elaborated into the system of Varnashrama Dharma [duty to maintain the four *ashramas* and the four *varnas*] with its concomitant evils."[37] Another Justice member, Tangavelu Pillai, who refused to employ Brahmans as priests, told a non-Brahman conference in Madura in 1918 that he was pleased to speak in "this ancient and historic City of Madura, the cradle of the Dravidian civilization and literature. The progress and development of the Dravidas is indissolubly bound up with the growth and development of public life in this ancient city which has been the seat of social, educational and political growth of our community."[38]

[37] T. Varadarajulu Naidu (comp.). *The Justice Movement, 1917*, Section II, p. 139.

[38] T. C. Tangavelu Pillai, *The Presidential Address Delivered at the Non-Brahmin Conference of the Madura District on the 13th October, 1918*, ed. L. K. Tulsiram (Madura. 1918). p. 1. "We are," he said, "the

Justice Party commitment to the encouragement of Tamil and Tamil studies took a number of different forms in the years that followed. One of its consistent demands was that Madras University, which only began a research program in Tamil in 1914, should give encouragement to Tamil by putting it on equal basis "with other classical languages."[39] Tangavelu Pillai complained about the poor quality of Tamil instruction at Madras University in a speech in the Legislative Council and urged that "those who are put in charge of Tamil should have taken either the B.A. degree in Tamil or should be regular Tamil pandits."[40] When a proposal for a Tamil university was under consideration, M. S. Purnalingam Pillai, a noted Tamil scholar who was secretary of the Tamil University Committee, moved at a Justice Confederation in December, 1925, that the government should in the near future grant to the Tamil districts a university to encourage the "growth of the Tamil language," as well as the development of "historical consciousness among Tamilians."[41] T. N. Sivagnanam Pillai (Justice Minister of Development, 1923–1926) frequently stressed the need for a Tamil university, which, as he pointed out, had been advocated for almost a decade.[42] He also objected

descendants of Chera, Chola and Pandian kingdoms which were able to keep their independence even against such emperors as Asoka, Chandragupta, Akbar and Aurangzeb up to the coming of the English." P. 16.

[39] *Madras Mail*, Dec. 31, 1919; see also *ibid.*, June 24, 1919; *Hindu*, Feb. 9, 1925; and Varadarajulu Naidu, *Justice Movement, 1917*, Section II, p. 21.

[40] *MLCP*, IV (Jan. 20, 1922), 2032. The Rajah of Ramnad (1889–1928), a Justice Party member, was, like his father, a patron of Tamil learning and was life president of the Madura Tamil Sangam. *Hindu* (weekly ed.), Aug. 9, 1928.

[41] *Hindu*, Dec. 21, 1925; *ibid.* (weekly ed.), Sept. 3, 1925.

[42] See the letter of K. S. Sambasiva Aiyer, a Tamil Smartha Brahman, to *New India*, July 29, 1916, in which he wrote that "it behoves the thinking spirits of Tamil-Aham [area inhabited by Tamils] to frame workable schemes for public discussion and adoption. The idea [of a Tamil university] is a glorious one and worthy of the best energies of every true Tamilian."

that Madras University was slighting Tamil and concentrating on Sanskrit, over which Brahmans held a virtual monopoly.[43] The sentiments of the Justice Party on this issue were reflected in a letter to *New India* in 1951 (July 5) by one V. Radhakrishnan: "When a well-exploited language like Sanskrit is helped in such a bounteous way as the rewarding of rich scholarships and generous grants, surely Tamil, the language of the land, Tamil, the only hope for the reconstruction of South Indian History, deserves better treatment." Sanskrit, he declared, was a dead language, good only for keeping the Brahmans in the ascendant.[44] In the Legislative Council, too, Justice members questioned whether the government should encourage Sanskrit colleges where the admissions were "restricted to particular castes."[45]

On a broader level, many Justicites condemned the "Aryan" Brahmans for having introduced into south India their *Puranas*, their *Ramayana*, and the *Vedas*, while they neglected indigenous Dravidian literature like the *Silappatikaram* and the *Kural* of Tiruvalluvar. One lecture, in Tamil, on the "Deluge of the Dark Ages," given at the Madura Tamil Sangam in 1921, particularly stressed the damage inflicted by Brahmans on Tamil literature. Tamil, the speaker said, was "the real language of the land," and only the emancipation of the Tamil country from the Brahmans would bring true freedom.[46] Other lectures emphasized the polarity between north and south. "Modern researches," said one lecturer at a Tamil *sangam* meeting, "in the domains of archeology, ethnology, philosophy, and anthropology have gone a great way to prove that the Tamilians had no sort of connection with

[43] An address entitled *Palan tamil* ("Ancient Tamil") which was given at the third Tamil Pundits Conference in Trichinopoly on April 11, 1925 (Trichinopoly, 1925). See also the report of the conference in the *Hindu*, Apr. 13, 1925.

[44] See also *Madras Mail*, Apr. 2, 1918; *New India*, Mar. 4, 1918.

[45] *MLCP*, VII (Mar. 23, 1922), 3392–3393, 3385; and *ibid.*, III (Nov. 16, 1921), 1460.

[46] See the printed text (Madura, 1921), p. 11.

the north or northern settlers, and they never derived their letters or arts or civilization from the Aryans."[47]

Echoing arguments that had first been given currency by Caldwell, many non-Brahmans accused Brahmans of injecting Tamil religion with idols and foreign Vedic doctrines. Many non-Brahman caste Hindus in the Justice Party wished to encourage the Saiva Siddhanta religious system, which had for its chief canon *The Twelve Tirumurai* in Tamil, and which claimed to be distinctive from the teachings of Sankara in its belief in a separate identity of the Supreme Spirit and the human. In 1886 a Saiva Siddhanta Sabha was established for the threefold purpose of cultivating Dravidian languages and history, influencing holders of religious endowments to eliminate corruption, and popularizing what was called Dravidian religion or Saiva Siddhanta.[48] One of the chief proponents was J. M. Nallaswami Pillai, a Tamil Vellala and government official (the father of J. N. Ramanathan, a prominent exponent of Tamil interests in the Justice Party). In 1897 he began a journal called *The Light of Truth; or Siddhanta Deepika*, in the hopes "that some of the alumni of the Madras University" might be induced to explore early Dravidian literature so as to throw light on the "normal literature, manners, customs, and so forth, of their own land; following the example of their distinguished countrymen in Bombay and Bengal."[49] Nallaswami Pillai lectured on Saiva Siddhanta and translated a number of Saiva Siddhanta texts into English; some of his articles from *Siddhanta Deepika* were published in 1911 in a volume entitled *Studies in Saiva Siddhanta*. He had hoped through his work to unite non-Brahmans, but as he told a Justice Party con-

[47] S. K. Devasikhamani, *The Tamils and Their Language* (Trichinopoly, 1919), p. 10. The lecture was given on November 25, 1918.

[48] *New India*, June 5, 1915. An interesting analysis of the system can be found in John H. Piet, *A Logical Presentation of the Saiva Siddhanta Philosophy* (Madras, 1952).

[49] J. M. Nallaswami Pillai, "Importance of Early Dravidian Literature," *The Light of Truth; or Siddhanta Deepika*, I, No. 3 (Aug. 21, 1897), 61.

ference in 1918, Saiva Siddhanta did not have the same force in mobilizing non-Brahman opinion as the Justice Party did.[50]

There were many other occasions when Tamil caste Hindus in the non-Brahman movement came out strongly in favor of Saiva Siddhanta as the original Tamil religion. C. Natesa Mudaliar, for instance, in the debate on the Hindu Religious Endowments Bill, said that Saiva Siddhanta was the "prehistoric religion of the Dravidians, [which] stands now as independent as it was thousands of years ago."[51] On another occasion, when the proposed appointment of a Reader in Indian philosophy at Madras University was being discussed in the University Senate, a dispute broke out between S. Satyamurti and T. A. Ramalingam Chetti about Saiva Siddhanta as a system of philosophy peculiar to Tamil Nad. Ramalingam Chetti, a former Justice member, insisted that if a Readership in Philosophy were to be established in the university it should be in "south Indian Philosophy" or Tamil Saiva Siddhanta. Satyamurti opposed him, arguing that simply because the bulk of Indian philosophy was written in Sanskrit was hardly a valid reason for not studying it.[52]

The distinguished Vellala historian M. S. Purnalingam Pillai was one of those who considered Saiva Siddhanta to be a great Tamilian contribution to world culture, and he explained why in his book *Tamil Literature*:

> The Saiva Siddhanta system is the indigenous philosophy of South India and the choicest product of the Tamilian intellect. The system does not recognise the Aryan limitation of Siva as the destroyer, but considers Him (rather *It*) as the author of

[50] *Madras Mail*, Oct. 30, 1918. Nallaswami Pillai died in 1920.

[51] *MLCP*, X (Dec. 18, 1922), 922. P. Sundaram Pillai in 1896 wrote: "With all deference to the Vedas, which have subsequently become the Dravidian as well as the Aryan Bible I believe that Saiva System of thought and worship [is] *peculiarly* our own." P. Sundaram Pillai to J. M. Nallaswami Pillai, letter dated Mar. 31, 1896, in *The Light of Truth; or Siddhanta Deepika*, II, No. 5 (October, 1898), 112.

[52] *Hindu*, Mar. 18, 1926.

> functions, creation, protection, destruction, grace and release. . . This high and noble system based on the Agamas or Saiva Scriptures, was corrupted by the puranic writers, whose sole object was to reconcile the Vedas and the Agamas and, in so doing, to give the palm to the former. Hence the modern Saivism . . . is full of the lovely creations of the puranic fancy and contains all the inconsistencies and improbabilities of the Aryan pantheism. The Tamilar [Tamilians] overborne by the political ascendancy of the Aryans, accepted the system, which stained the white radiance of their philosophical faith, and popularised it, though it was quite against their grain.[53]

These feelings of resentment against the Brahmans, as representatives of the Aryan invasion, for their corruption of the original Dravidian religion were transmitted not only by the annual meetings of the Saiva Siddhanta Sabha but by numerous Saiva Siddhanta meetings held in the district towns of the Tamil areas. These meetings did much to popularize the new interpretation of Valmiki's *Ramayana,* in which Ravana was not a weakling but a hero, and Rama, on the other hand, was immoral and dishonest. It was through these meetings that non-Brahman caste Hindus in the Tamil country were made aware of the superiority of the Saiva scriptures, the Agamas, over the Sanskrit *Vedas.*[54]

A corollary of the belief that the Aryans had defiled the religion of the Dravidians was the accusation that they had also introduced the caste system into south India. One letter to *New India* in 1916 (May 3) expressed the opinions of many non-Brahmans when it said that the Dravidians "are outside the fourfold division of the Aryan Castes. Their castes have each a distinct name of its own. It is true their position at present is very low and pitiable. That cannot justify anyone calling them Shudra, a term contemptible

[53] M. S. Purnalingam Pillai, *Tamil Literature,* p. 254.

[54] See the proceedings of the sixth session of the Saiva Siddhanta Sabha, *New India,* June 24, 1915; and the proceedings of the Saiva Siddhanta Mahasamajam, *ibid.,* Mar. 18, 1918.

enough." As we have seen, this resentment dated back to the late nineteenth century, when Vellalas, at least, began to feel offended at being classed in the ranks of Sudras. Sundaram Pillai, writing to Nallaswami Pillai in 1896, complained that the "Vellalas who form the flower of the Dravidian race have now so far forgotten their nationality as to habitually think and speak of themselves as Sudras."[55] Utterances of this sort became more commonplace after the founding of the Justice Party. Tyagaraja Chetti, in late 1917, said that the Brahmans' attitude toward the non-Brahmans was as old as "the Aryan civilisation itself, which made all labouring classes servants, the servants of the Aryans, calling them Sudras."[56]

The Tamil Vellalas were indeed, of all the non-Brahman caste Hindu groups, the ones most anxious to shed the Sudra designation. And since they formed the backbone of the Justice Party, their social and political resentments were closely intertwined. They were second as a caste group only to the Brahmans, and thus in a position to feel particularly threatened by the Tamil Brahmans. In certain areas such as Tinnevelly district, a seat of Vellala strength, they were almost as orthodox as the Brahmans. And they were in an ideal position to reap the advantages if the Brahmans were toppled. Another element that added a sense of dynamism to their conflict with the Brahmans was the identification of the Vellalas with the original Dravidians, an identification that they liked to assert by using the term *Tamiḻar* or "Tamilians," by which Vellalas are commonly referred to in Tamil.

M. Srinivasa Aiyangar, a Tamil Sri Vaishnava Brahman, popularized this identification to some extent in his work *Tamil Studies*,[57] but it was carried furthest by Swami Vedachalam

[55] Letter dated Dec. 19, 1896, quoted in J. M. Nallaswami Pillai, "Ancient Tamil Civilization," p. 112.

[56] Varadarajulu Naidu, *Justice Movement, 1917*, Section II, p. 86. See also the remark of the Rajah of Pudukottai, a strong Justicite, in *ibid.*, p. 122.

[57] M. Srinivasa Aiyangar, *Tamil Studies; or, Essays on the History of the Tamil People, Language, Religion and Literature* (Madras, 1914), pp. 42–43.

(1875–1950). In a Tamil work called *Vēḷāḷar nāḳariḳam* ("Vellala Civilization"), published in 1923, Swami Vedachalam declaimed at length against Brahmans.[58] Using the *Tolḳappiyam* and other Tamil works as his sources, he argued that the Brahmans had come to the Tamil country, established their caste system under a code of Manu, and relegated all Dravidians to positions of servility and degradation. Unlike other parts of India where there were Kshatriyas and Vaisyas, the Tamil-speaking areas had been forced by the Aryan Brahmans into a strict division of Brahman and non-Brahman, all the non-Brahman caste Hindus being classed as Sudras and kept down by means of vicious laws. Like many other writers, Swami Vedachalam identified the Vellalas with the ancient Dravidians, the heirs of a proud and great civilization. Thus the Vellalas got a myth of their origins and degradation, from which they developed a strong drive for a sense of identity and cultural self-confidence.

Other writers, such as the Indian Christian J. P. D. David, originally a Vellala, and the author of a pamphlet entitled *Tiraviṭa iyaḳḳamum vēḷāḷaḳ ḳavuṇṭarum* ("The Dravidian Movement and the Vellala Gounders"), published in 1918, urged this caste group to take advantage of the opportunities implicit in the non-Brahman movement. Vellalas also claimed a special role as patrons of the major Tamil authors. In 1915 S. Somasundaram Pillai, the future spokesman for non-Brahman interests in government service, was quoted in *New India* (Apr. 28) as saying that "The Vellala has been lord of the manor, the patron of literature, and promoter and conservator of piety and virtue. . . . Kamban dedicated his immortal *Ramayana* to his patron, a Vellala."[59]

[58] See the second edition (Tirunelveli, 1957), which is a reprint of the 1923 edition. Swami Vedachalam later changed his name to its Tamil equivalent, Maraimalaiyatikal.

[59] Gounders, a large subcaste within the Vellala caste group, have a tradition that they are descended from an amanuensis of Kamban. See F. A. Nicholson, *Manual of the Coimbatore District*, p. 57.

S. Somasundara Bharati (*Tamil Classics and Tamilakam*) argued that the author of the most famous Tamil work, the *Tirukural*, was a Vellala rather than an outcaste as was commonly supposed.[60]

One of the most perceptive analyses of the relation between the Vellalas and Tamil culture was written by a Telugu Brahman, N. Subba Rao (general secretary to the Congress in 1915). In an essay in *For and Against the Andhra Province* (1913), he pointed out the uniqueness of the Tamil language. The Tamils were, he wrote, justifiably proud that their literature "is the only Vernacular literature in India which has not been content with imitating Sanskrit but has honourably attempted to . . . outshine it." Furthermore, "The Tamils have developed a religion and philosophy on their own lines, known as *Saiva Siddhanta* which Dr. Pope regards as the 'most influential and undoubtedly the most valuable of the religions of India' and whose orthodox Vellala followers have adopted a strictly vegetarian diet, eschewing all liquor and claim to rank as high as the Brahmins in their intellectuality and purity of life."[61]

If Caldwell, Pope, and the Brahman Swaminatha Iyer helped to provide the requisite vocabulary and arguments for Dravidian-

[60] S. Somasundara Bharati, *Thiruvalluvar*, (Madura, 1929), p. 30. An interesting feature of this debate was that M. C. Rajah, the spokesman for the untouchables in Madras, concluded that the untouchables had been punished by the invading Aryans, but that some of their number, by accepting the spiritual guidance of the Brahmins, became "Vellalas . . . in times of peace and Kshatriyas . . . in times of war." M. C. Rajah, *The Oppressed Hindus*, p. 22.

[61] *For and Against the Andhra Province*, p. 46. A decade earlier, when T. Ponemballem Pillai published Sundaram Pillai's criticism of the morality of the *Ramayana*, T. Sadasiva Aiyer, a Tamil Smartha Brahman, wrote that "the ambition of many of my Southern Vellala friends and the so-called Non-Brahmin portion of our community in the southern portion of India to now cut themselves entirely adrift from Sree Rama and Sree Krishna and the Sanskrit Vedas and the Thiruvaimozhi Prabandham and to raise a standard of revolt on a pure Tamil Saivite anti-Brahmin and non-Aryan basis . . . [is] an utter wild goose chase." "The Morality of the Ramayana — A Review," *Malabar Quarterly Review*, VIII (September, 1909), 214.

ists such as Sundaram Pillai, the Justice Party and the M.P.A. were responsible for giving those cultural ideas a political content. And with these arguments the non-Brahmans, particularly the Vellalas, were able to use the myth of their identity with the ancient Dravidians to prove that the Tamil Brahmans were foreigners in their own land.

Brahman Reactions

In the face of these challenges south Indian Brahmans made increasing attempts to illustrate the contribution of Brahmans to ancient Tamil civilization. One of the attempts was that of M. Srinivasa Aiyangar in his *Tamil Studies.* In this work Srinivasa Aiyangar reviewed all the materials available for research on the Tamil past and arrived at a number of conclusions, some of which would not be accepted by scholars today. He agreed with many of his non-Brahman contemporaries that the ancient Dravidians were to be identified with the Tamil Vellalas, but he also argued against the ideas of Caldwell, Somasundaram Pillai, and Somasundara Bharati that Tamil and Tamil culture were free from Sanskrit: "The Early Dravidians are considered by Dr. Caldwell as the framers of the best moral codes, and by the new school of non-Aryan Tamil Scholars as the inventors, independent of the slightest Aryan or other influence, of grammar, philosophy, theology, and in fact of every science and art. It is enough to remind them that the earliest grammarians of Tamil were Brahmans, their first spiritual instructors were Brahmans, and their first teachers of philosophy were also Brahmans."[62]

Another Brahman scholar, R. Swaminatha Iyer, a retired deputy collector, took up the argument from the philological point of view. Evidence showed, he wrote, that "what are known as Dravidian languages are in all their present essential features a creation of Aryan and Aryanised immigrants from the North . . . It also follows . . . that the tradition about Agastya's immigration to

[62] Srinivasa Aiyangar, *Tamil Studies*, pp. 42–43.

the south is not a mere myth and that what is known as Dravidian civilization of the South is merely the civilization of these Aryan and Aryanised immigrants."[63] A Tamil Brahman novelist named A. Madhaviah wrote an article in *New India* (Aug. 10, 1916) denouncing those who called the *Bhagavad Gita* and the *Ramayana* and other Sanskrit works "the cunning invention of a diabolical priesthood."[64] Wife-lifting, he said, like cattle-lifting, was not a vice peculiar to any race or civilization. K. S. Ramaswami Sastri commented that the theory suggesting Rama's inferiority and Ravana's superiority, thus reversing the traditional meaning of the *Ramayana*, was "really going too far."[65]

It is evident that many Brahmans thought the best way to defend their position in south Indian society was to join Mrs. Besant—either as members of the Home Rule movement, or as Theosophists, or at least as readers of *New India*. Others joined the Varnashrama Dharma movement. This movement was centered on a belief in so-called "pure" Hinduism, including a respect for, and adherence to, caste duties and to the four *ashramas*. In April, 1915, a group of Tamil Brahmans mainly from Srirangam and Kumbakonam formed a Varnashrama Sabha, and later that year they began to publish a journal, *Varnashrama Dharma*. Another journal, the *Hindu Message*, was started in October, 1917. Under the leadership of two Smartha Brahmans, K. Sundaram Aiyer (1854–1938) and N. Subramanya Aiyer (1854–1948), a series of conferences was held at which Brahmans such as K. S. Ramaswami Sastri gave lectures on the place of the Sastras in the "scheme of Life."[66] At one of these conferences a resolution was

[63] *Hindu* (weekly ed.), Dec. 18, 1924.

[64] Madhaviah, who wrote in both English and Tamil, was one of the first novelists to deal with Tamil Brahman life. His works include *Muthumeenakshi: The Autobiography of a Brahmin Girl* (1915), *Thillai Govindan* (1916), *Manimekalai* (1923), and *Lieut. Panju: A Modern Indian.*

[65] *New India*, July 6, 1916.

[66] *Ibid.*, May 3, 1916. K. S. Ramaswami Sastri has written lives of the

passed reiterating the belief that the "Vedas and the Smritis had for their sole object the preservation of the Brahmana race without any admixture of other blood, so that the Vedas may be preserved by a set of qualified people and bred up in a purely Vaidic atmosphere."[67] One essay sponsored by the leaders of the movement noted that "The Brahmin is the fit leader in the field of Varnashrama Dharma, in the sense that he alone is qualified to show the way to others."[68]

For the most part, the Varnashrama Dharma movement, rather than facing the Brahman–non-Brahman issue squarely, tried to cajole the non-Brahmans into joining the Brahmans. They too, the reasoning went, were "noble Aryans," and they must "firmly believe that the truly orthodox Brahmin is your real friend and Saviour, both for the life here and for the life beyond."[69] Many Brahmans as well as non-Brahmans were dismayed by these pronouncements. The poet Subramania Bharati very clearly disassociated himself from the movement and its beliefs. "I happen," he said, "to differ from the worthy Professor [Sundaram Aiyer], aye differ fundamentally, radically, absolutely. I think that even we, Brahmanas, are men and each man's tuft or dinner is his own private concern."[70] V. S. Srinivasa Sastri, a Tamil Smartha Brahman who led the Servants of India Society, told the Joint Select Committee in London that no politician of "any consequence" had anything to do with such an "obscurantist body" as Varnashrama Dharma.[71] Justice Party leaders also strongly opposed the move-

two leaders: *Professor K. Sundarama Aiyar: His Life and Works* (1944), and *Sri N. Subramanya Aiyer: A Biography* (1956).

[67] *New India*, July 25, 1916.

[68] A. Ganesan and V. R. Ramachandran, *Prize Essays on the Practical Methods of Establishing Varna Ashrama Dharma* (Kumbakonam, 1917), p. 9.

[69] G. Ramachandra Aiyer, *Our Present Situation, Social and Religious* (Srirangam, 1918), pp. 22, 36.

[70] *New India*, May 18, 1915.

[71] Great Britain, Parliamentary Papers, Vol. IV (*Reports of Committees,*

ment, which they thought aimed to re-enslave non-Brahman Hindus.[72]

In politics, where the threat to the Brahman position was even more apparent, the Brahmans never organized any concerted counterattack on the non-Brahmans. Individual Brahmans, like C. P. Ramaswami Aiyer, a man of great intelligence and sophistication, suggested that the non-Brahman's feeling of being threatened was purely subjective. Ramaswami Aiyer told Montagu during his visit to India in 1917 of his strong desire to rid politics of the "absurd representations against the Brahmans."[73] Some Brahmans thought the division of south Indian society might be healed by abandoning the terms Brahman and non-Brahman. As V. P. Madhava Rao, a Maharashtrian Brahman from Tanjore, put it, there were Brahmans, Kshatriyas, Vaisyas, and Sudras in Hindu society, but there was no such distinction as between Brahman and non-Brahman.[74] Another Brahman, in response to O. Tanikachala Chetti's attacks in the Legislative Council, criticized his placing "brahmins in one category and . . . the rest of the world in another."[75]

After the issuing of the Communal Government Orders, which virtually closed a traditional and major employment possibility for Brahmans, Tamil Brahmans began to leave Madras city for other urban areas such as Bombay. This they did not "of their own free will and choice" but because the "advent of the non-Brahmins into power in Madras" had shut off "many avenues" of

Vol. II). House of Commons Paper No. 203, November, 1919, "Joint Select Committee on the Government of India Bill, Vol. II: Evidence," Answer to Q. 3925, p. 235.

[72] See Varadarajulu Naidu, *The Justice Movement, 1917*, Section II, p. 8, and T. M. Nair, "An Indian's View of the Indian Problem," *Nineteenth Century and After*, LXXXIV (September, 1918), 424.

[73] Edwin S. Montagu, *An Indian Diary*, ed. Venetia Montagu, entry for Dec. 20, 1917, p. 123.

[74] *Madras Mail*, Feb. 27, 1920.

[75] *MLCP*, II (Aug. 5, 1921), 439.

employment.[76] The Brahmans who remained in Madras presidency had to consider other areas of professional life. One Brahman in the Legislative Council pointed out that "There is the Bar, there is the medical profession and there are [a] thousand and one other professions wherein if they [the Brahmans] are really intelligent they can make themselves felt."[77] But the most definitive answer to the problem of Brahman employment came in 1917 from D. G. Lokashundaram Iyer, who suggested that when the public services were closed to the Brahman "he will have recourse to and will have to enter largely the trade and industries of the country. His advent into these regions may mark the regeneration of the country, but then the struggle of the Brahmana with the others will be all along the line. The Non-Brahmana, when he goes to the wall in the keen struggle for existence, may then have a greater cause to hate his successful adversary in business than he has . . . now."[78]

Many Brahmans in Madras did in fact find that they could use their skills in industry and trade, and it was in these fields that they were able to utilize many of the capacities previously turned to government service. But this migration of the Brahmans both from their own land and from their traditional occupations was clear evidence of how successful the non-Brahmans had been.[79] It was a curious situation, though C. Sankaran Nair had prophesied as much when he appeared before the Joint Select Committee in 1919. In answer to a question by Sir John Rees as to the need for some sort of government legislation favoring non-Brahmans, Sankaran Nair said: "My opinion is that when the matter comes to

[76] *Hindu* (weekly ed.), Nov. 25, 1926.

[77] *MLCP*, II (Aug. 5, 1921), 443.

[78] *New India*, May 8, 1917.

[79] See James J. Berna, *Industrial Entrepreneurship in Madras State* (New York, 1960), p. 84, for an indication of Brahman migration into Madras industry.

be inquired into ten years hence it is possible that the Brahmins of Madras may want protection against the non-Brahmins."[80]

Modernizing Tamil

Many Brahmans in the Tamil area tried to slough off their identification with Sanskrit and to establish themselves as joint owners of Tamil along with the non-Brahmans. One Smartha Brahman elaborating this claim wrote: "I say 'our Tamil,' because it is as much the spoken language of the Brahmins as of others in this part of the Presidency. The Brahmin has long ceased to be a Bhoodeva [God on earth] merely, and Sanskrit therefore could not continue to be his spoken language."[81] M. Srinivasa Aiyangar also pointed out that "the home-speech of all these people, including the Brahmans, is Tamil."[82] By stressing this identification with Tamil Nad and the regional culture, the Tamil Brahmans were trying to avoid non-Brahman criticism; but they also had a serious desire to combat the threat of cultural alienation by actively participating in the transformation of Tamil into a more pliable language, one that could transmit modern political and scientific concepts. In 1916 a Tamil Scientific Terms Society was founded, chiefly by Brahmans, specifically to answer the needs of Tamil in the twentieth century. This it hoped to do mainly by issuing a *Journal*, edited by two Brahmans, one of whom was the future Congress leader C. Rajagopalachariar. In the first issue the editors defined the aims of the association:

> The greatest difficulty that confronts those who wish to produce books in the languages of the country—whether for the use of the very large number of common people who cannot either in the near or distant future, so far as our little eyes can see, possibly learn the English language or for the use of pupils in our

[80] Joint Select Committee: *Evidence*, Answer to Q. 9532, p. 552.
[81] *Our Present Situation*, pp. 30–31.
[82] *Tamil Studies*, p. 381.

> schools — is we believe, the absence of adequate and precise terms for scientific terms for scientific ideas and the chaotic state in which attempts to build up such terms are left to remain. The humble aim of this Association . . . is to make a small attempt at reducing this chaos to some sort of order.[83]

Various methods of creating new terms for Tamil in textbooks, scientific or otherwise, were proposed. P. Sivaswami Iyer, a Tamil Smartha Brahman, suggested that instead of relying on the belief "that Tamil was a divine gift and that its vocabulary was copious, and its diction rich and self-contained," serious attempts should be made to incorporate into Tamil, from other languages if necessary, terms that were easy to understand.[84]

C. Subramania Bharati urged that Tamil scholars should meet and decide among themselves the equivalent in Tamil for scientific terms.[85] But another Brahman, C. R. Krishna Rao, writing in the *Educational Review*, thought the problem was more complicated than Bharati realized:

> Coin the words and equivalents, says the intrepid advocate of the vernaculars. This is more easily said than done. People who give this advice so glibly can have no conception of the enormous number of words that have no equivalents in the vernaculars and for which equivalents have to be coined. . . . This is not attained by manufacturing uncouth and ununderstandable Sanskrit compounds, as the equivalents of equally unintelligible English words. The fact is that our vernaculars are in a most crude state so far as scientific exposition is concerned. It is no answer to say that we have very good poetry and some grandiloquent prose, in the vernaculars. A language that is well equipped for poetic expression is not necessarily so for a scientific thesis. Kalidasa and

[83] Editorial in *Journal of the Tamil Scientific Terms Society*, I (October, 1916), 1.
[84] *Madras Mail*, Aug. 28, 1917.
[85] Article by C. Subramania Bharati (in Tamil), *Journal of the Tamil Scientific Terms Society*, I (November, 1916), 9.

> Bhavabhuti may well feel handicapped if they were set to translate a modern elementary text-book of science.[86]

Rajagopalachariar believed that "Sanskrit formations" were preferable because they could be used without ambiguity or difficulty in all Indian languages, "Dravidian as well as Sanskrit"; also, the same process could be used for all the languages, and thus a great deal of time could be saved.[87] Scholars realized that in order to adapt Tamil to modern usage they must do more than merely invent, or borrow, terms for scientific purposes; they must also reform the Tamil alphabet itself. T. S. Narayana Sastri, a Brahman, suggested in a pamphlet entitled *Tamil as a Universal Alphabet* (1916) that a system of writing Tamil should be constructed whereby it could represent the sounds of any Indian language, ancient or modern. Narayana Sastri, incidentally, thought Tamil to be certainly as old as Sanskrit, "both belonging, in my opinion, to the Arya family of languages."

Vernacularizing Politics

As the stature of Tamil as an ancient and venerable language became more and more apparent, moves were made to develop it into a workable political language. Unlike Telugu, which had begun to take on the characteristics of a modern language in the nineteenth century, Tamil still lacked much of the vocabulary that it needed for politics. Only at the beginning of the Home Rule movement in 1916 did it come into use as a campaign language.[88] The Telugu Congress unit, granted in 1917, and the subsequent

[86] Quoted in *ibid.*, I (October, 1916), 6.

[87] *Ibid.*, p. 4.

[88] On July 29, 1915, *New India* editorialized: "Political life has necessarily . . . originated in the towns, and urban political propagandists have established political associations in the Mofussil. But though the English-educated man may be the originator of the political movement, it will never be vigorous in the Mofussil unless taken up and guided by the people dwelling there."

use of Telugu at meetings encouraged the Tamils to employ their own language for political purposes. Nearly all these efforts were the result of Congress members—both Brahmans and non-Brahmans. The Justice Party, having no desire to become a mass-based party, made no particular attempt to work in Tamil. At a Madras Congress Provincial Conference held at Cuddalore in 1917, V. P. Madhava Rao, a Maharashtrian Brahman from Tanjore, pointed out that those who had spoken in Tamil at the meeting had demonstrated conclusively "the capacity of the Tamil language for the expression of ideas connected with administration, with law, and politics."[89] The following year Dr. P. Varadarajulu Naidu, a Congress member, undertook a political tour for the Home Rule movement in which he used only Tamil, and he effectively proved how valuable it could be as a political tool. At Negapatam, his first triumph, he attracted a huge crowd of workers from the railway shops. At Madura he spoke to millworkers—so vigorously, in fact, that he was arrested.[90] He was convicted on the evidence of shorthand transcripts of his Tamil speeches, despite his protest that such transcripts could not accurately represent his statements because Tamil shorthand was insufficiently developed. But he still continued to advocate the use of Tamil for political purposes: "I have felt that for the national uplift and the attainment of real and enduring Home Rule in India, the political concepts, aims and method of work which have hitherto been the exclusive possession of English educated people should be brought within the familiar reach of people at large, through the medium of their own mother tongue. I have tried to achieve this purpose in the Tamil Districts."[91]

[89] *Hindu* (weekly ed.), May 18, 1917.

[90] *Madras Mail*, May 4, 1918; B. S. Baliga, *Madras District Gazetteers: Madurai* (Madras, 1960), p. 74; *Hindu* (weekly ed.), Nov. 8, 1918.

[91] *Hindu* (weekly ed.), Nov. 8, 1918. Varadarajulu Naidu was a Balija Naidu and therefore spoke both Tamil and Telugu—the latter not so well, it seems. When he tried to use Telugu to address an Andhra Conference in

After the First World War had ended and greater freedom of speech was possible in the presidency, the issue of speaking only in Tamil at political meetings in the Tamil area arose once more. At a Congress meeting on August 23, 1919, S. Somasundara Bharati successfully got through a resolution declaring that all speeches at political meetings should be made in Tamil instead of in English.[92] This meant that at later meetings even C. P. Ramaswami Iyer and V. S. Srinivasa Sastri, Brahmans well known for their command of English, were obligated to speak in Tamil.[93] Two years later, in 1921, when all four Dravidian language areas at last had separate Congress organizational units or circles, it was stipulated that all proceedings, accounts, and transactions were to be carried out not in English but in the language of the circle—that is, in Tamil, Telugu, Kannada, or Malayalam.

Journalism, too, was useful in developing Tamil into a political language. The first Tamil-language daily newspaper, *Swadeshimitran*, founded as a weekly in 1880 and made a daily in 1899, was for some years the only Tamil or vernacular daily in south India. But in 1917 both the Justice Party and the M.P.A. established daily papers printed in Tamil. The Justice daily, *Dravidan*, was perhaps financially more successful than the M.P.A.'s *Desabhaktan*, but the latter, under the editorship of Tiru. Vi. Kaliyanasundaram Mudaliar, was certainly the more distinguished.

Tiru. Vi. Ka. (as Kaliyanasundaram Mudaliar is known in Tamil Nad), a Vellala, was born in 1883. He was educated at

Ellore in November, 1926, he was unable to express himself adequately and had to switch to English. *Ibid.*, Nov. 30, 1926.

[92] *Ibid.*, Aug. 25, 1919.

[93] *Ibid.*, June 24, 1920. On one occasion Srinivasa Sastri was to give a speech in Madura in English, but when he began a voice from the end of the hall called out, "Mr. Sastrigal must speak in Tamil." According to the *Hindu* (Apr. 2, 1925), "that was the signal for the creation of some disturbance from that part of the hall, and all appeals by the President to preserve order were in vain."

Wesley High School in Madras and later at a school of commerce. He was first attracted to Mrs. Besant's Home Rule movement, but later joined the M.P.A. Through his efforts as editor of *Desabhaktan* he established a new style of Tamil journalism, less conservative than the old and openly directed at the mass Tamil-speaking public, whom he hoped to arouse to political awareness. It was, he thought, "regrettable indeed that while all the rest of the world is basking in the sunshine of liberty, the Tamil land alone should not be alive to it."[94] A good many of his editorials criticized the government and the Tamilians, and on at least two occasions in 1918, while the war was still in progress, he was in trouble with the Government of Madras.[95] He also became involved in the labor movement started by Mrs. Besant's friend B. P. Wadia, and he later became an important labor leader himself. His most enduring contribution was, however, in the field of journalism. He left *Desabhaktan* in July, 1920 (the paper was taken over by V. V. S. Aiyer, who later founded the Tamil Gurukulam at Shermadevi), to start his own journal, a weekly called *Nava Sakti*. *Nava Sakti* was more intellectual and serious than *Desabhaktan*, and dealt not only with political matters but also with education and art and such topics as social equality and the welfare of women.[96] Like *Desabhaktan*, however, the new journal spoke directly to Tamilians, in Tamil Nad and overseas as well, creating for them a picture of their past heritage and at the same time trying to stir them to action in the present.[97] In 1921, for instance,

[94] *Desabhaktan*, Jan. 16, 1920 (*Madras NNR, 1920*).

[95] Tiru Vi. Kaliyāṇasuntaraṉār, *Vāḻkkaik kuṟippukaḷ* ["Notes on Life"] (Madras, 1944), pp. 274–280. A few of his editorials were published in book form under the title *Tēsapaktāmirtam* ("Nectar of Patriotism").

[96] *Vāḻkkaik kuṟippukaḷ*, p. 289. The first issue appeared on October 20, 1920. A small number of the essays from *Nava Sakti* (especially for the late 1920's and 1930's) can be found in a collection entitled *Tamiḻ sōlai* ["Tamil Garden"] (Madras, 1959); this is a reprint of the first edition of 1935.

[97] *Vāḻkkaik kuṟippukaḷ*, p. 290; and the editorial entitled "Tamiḻmoḻi" ["Tamil Language"] which appeared in *Desabhaktan*, Mar. 12, 1918; also

Tiru. Vi. Ka., complaining of the poor response of the Tamil districts to the noncooperation movement, wrote that "If the old Tamil civilization, education and rule were now prevalent in the country spiritual movements like that of non-cooperation would spread without any effort. But modern civilization, education and [the] system of administration stand in the way of that movement whose express object is the destruction of these three things."[98]

There is no doubt that Tiru. Vi. Ka. gave Tamil journalism a literary stature and quality that it had not possessed before. He used a style of Tamil known as *sen Tamiḻ* or "pure Tamil" to describe political and social ideas—the first time this had been done—and his efforts won him great admiration and attracted to him and to the cause of Tamil journalism many who would otherwise have remained untouched by political opinion.[99]

The identification of a Dravidian culture by the Christian missionaries provided non-Brahmans with an opportunity to identify themselves with this ancient Dravidian culture. Their methods of documenting this identification took many forms—the formation of political parties, a demand for the recognition of what were thought to be indigenous systems of language, religion, and medicine, and, in the second and third decades of the century, an interest in literature and journalism. Gradually, the Tamil language was being transformed into a weapon of great power and expressiveness. Mostly through the efforts of the editors of the *Dravidan*, Bhaktavatsalam Pillai and later J. S. Kannappar, through Varadarajulu Naidu and his papers the *Prapanchamitran*

Tēsapakṭāmirtam, pp. 112–117. *Nava Sakti* was distributed among the Tamil population in Ceylon, Burma, and the Straits Settlements.

[98] *Nava Sakti*, Feb. 11, 1921 (*Madras NNR*, 1921); see also *ibid.*, July 7, 1922 (*Madras NNR, 1922*).

[99] Pulavar Arasu, *Tiru. Vi. Kaliyāṇasuntaraṉār*, p. 45. For a statement of Tiru. Vi. Ka.'s contribution to Tamil journalism, see Xavier S. Thani Nayakam, "Regional Nationalism in Twentieth Century Tamil Literature," *Tamil Culture*, X (March, 1963), 1–23.

and *Tamil Nadu*, and those of Kaliyanasundaram Mudaliar in the columns first of *Desabhaktan* and later *Nava Sakti*, Tamil as a literate modern language came to have a stature of which Tamils could feel proud.

Implicit in all these activities was that the Brahmans as Aryans from the north had no role in the creation or maintenance of Dravidian culture. If some Tamil Brahmans, long renowned for their Sanskrit learning, reacted to the threat of Dravidianism by seeking to emphasize their connection with Tamil and with the Tamil region and all it represented, it was a losing battle. Other deeper and more elemental forces were at work which assisted in giving currency to the belief that Tamil was the sole possession of the non-Brahmans. By law, Brahmans were to lose their positions as administrators and government servants. Their hold on the educational institutions, particularly Madras University, was broken. And as politicians their position was challenged both by the Justice Party and by Congress. It was the non-Brahman threat to their economic welfare and security that posed the greatest immediate problem, and the only solution was to redirect Brahman skills and capacities into trade and industry in Tamil Nad and in the urban areas of north India. Non-Brahman successes were to have more significant long-term effects for south India; for the Dravidianists realized that in the Brahmans they had good whipping boys, and as a result the forces for Tamil separatism became involved in a series of battles which helped to perpetuate social conflict in south India, and particularly in the Tamil area.

Chapter 9

NATIONAL AND TAMIL POLITICS, 1925-1929

The year 1925 was an important watershed in the politics of the Tamil-speaking area of Madras. In April, the death of Tyagaraja Chetti forced the Justice Party once again to cast about for new resources of leadership, support, policy, and organization. In November, Ramaswami Naicker's exit from the Tamil Nad Congress after the conference at Conjeevaram made it possible for him to strike out on his own and in so doing to influence the transitional position of the Justice Party. For Congress as well, this year was important in that it brought into local and national prominence S. Srinivasa Iyengar, who was able to organize Swaraj forces in Madras to considerable electoral advantage.

The development of Tamil and national politics in the years immediately following 1925 indicated the re-emergence of a series of Congress policies which enabled the Congress to emerge in the first concerted all-India noncooperation movement, gradually drawing Tamils into national politics. Also, Ramaswami Naicker, taking advantage of prevailing Dravidianist theories and the decay of the Justice Party, employed his own remarkable agitational skills to mobilize the loyalties of Tamilians for a Tamil state. But as a result, many of the non-Brahmans who joined the Congress in the late 1920's were often unsure of their loyalties and wavered between their support for nationalist and Tamil aspirations.

Decline of the Justice Party

The Justice Party wasted no time in its efforts to put its house in order following the death of Tyagaraja Chetti. On May 25, 1925,

a "reunion" meeting was held at the Victoria Public Hall in Madras and the two dissidents, K. V. Reddi Naidu and C. Natesa Mudaliar, formally returned to the party, with pleas for unity and cooperation.[1] On July 12 the Rajah of Panagal, who was Minister for Local Self-Government and Chief Minister, was elected leader of the party.[2] Reddi Naidu warned the party that its fortunes "were at a low ebb" and that serious efforts must be made to establish branches in the towns and villages of the province or the party would lose disastrously in the coming elections.[3]

Many noticed the decay of the Justice Party organization both before and after the "reunion" meeting. The previous autumn, in October, 1924, Mariadas Ratnaswami, speaking as chairman of the Seventh Justice Confederation, had pointed out that the Swaraj Party organization reached "down from the capital to the districts, the towns and villages"[4] and had urged that Justice organization should be strengthened after the same pattern. The efficiency of the Swaraj organization threw into bold relief the many inadequacies of the Justice Party as a mechanism for attracting votes. One commentator in the *Madras Mail* (Aug. 14, 1925) viewed the effect of the Swaraj Party on Justice affairs in this way: "When a virile group of men who, however violent in language and however unbalanced in their view at all events knew their mind and had no hesitation in speaking it out entered into the game the 'Justice' Party came to look uncommonly like a flock of startled sheep each running in a different direction." The Swarajists had clever and skillful campaign techniques, including *bhajana* processions of the sort first used by Congress in the 1921 noncooperation campaign, which aimed to bring "politics down from the Gokhale Hall to the beach, from the club to the street

[1] *Hindu*, May 26, 1925.
[2] *Ibid.*, July 13, 1925. Some 600 persons attended this meeting.
[3] *Ibid.*, June 1, 1925.
[4] *Madras Mail*, Oct. 4, 1924.

corner."[5] They knew the importance of nursing a constituency and of carefully selecting candidates—something the Justice Party seemed to ignore—and they developed skill in the use of these techniques as they went along, especially in the electoral contests for the Madras Corporation.[6] By 1927, it had won almost half the seats on that body.[7]

The Swaraj Party was outstandingly successful in the Legislative Council elections of 1926. The Justice Party, complacent despite the warnings and unaccustomed to effective opposition, only began to campaign as the elections drew near, emulating in a rather clumsy way some of the techniques of the opposition. On the eve of voting, in fact, the rivalry between the two parties in the *mofussil* as well as in Madras city grew so intense that the Madras government issued a Government Order reminding officials and magistrates of the necessity of maintaining an absolutely impartial attitude so that "all parties equally should have fair and reasonable opportunities" to address the electorate.[8] Several fracases broke out between Justicites and Swarajists on election eve. But the conclusion was foregone, despite the blind optimism of the Rajah of Panagal.[9] The jubilant Swarajists won 41 seats, the Justice Party only 22, and Independents 36.[10]

Since the Swaraj Party had pledged itself to fulfill its principle of obstructing government business by not forming a ministry,

[5] *Ibid.*, June 2, 1925.

[6] *Ibid.*, Aug. 10 and July 4, 1925. As the *Mail* commented: "The fact is that the Justice Party are not so much put up by their party organisations, as they put themselves up and then the Party comes along and adopts them."

[7] *Ibid.*, Sept. 29, 1927.

[8] MRO, Public, Ordinary Series, G.O. 911, Oct. 20, 1926.

[9] See *Dravidan*, Oct. 14, 1926 (*Madras NNR, 1926*), and *Madras Mail*, Nov. 5, 1926. For Panagal's optimism, see Pulavar Arasu, *Tiru. Vi. Kaliyāṇasuntaraṉār*, p. 66, and the written statement given to the author by A. Kumaraswami Tampoe, Nov. 24, 1962.

[10] Great Britain, Indian Statutory Commission, Vol. VI, *Memorandum Submitted to the Indian Statutory Commission by the Madras Government*, p. 17.

C. V. S. Narasimha Raju, the Swaraj Party leader in the Council, declined the Governor's invitation to form a ministry. The Rajah of Panagal also declined to form a ministry on behalf of the Justice Party on the grounds that it would be unable to retain office in the face of Swaraj majority opposition. Finally, P. Subaroyan, an Oxford-educated *zamindar*, formerly of the Justice Party but elected as an Independent in 1926, accepted the office of chief minister, and two other Independents, A. Ranganatha Mudaliar, a Theosophist and a Vellala who had been a deputy collector, and R. N. Arokiaswami Mudaliar, a Roman Catholic, formerly an engineer with the Public Works Department, also came into office.[11]

For the first time in six years the Justice Party was obliged to take a secondary role in the Madras Legislative Council. The party not only had failed to retain the confidence of the Muslims and the untouchables, and of some non-Brahman caste Hindus; it had also, particularly the party leader Panagal himself, abused its powers and privileges of office.[12] The Swaraj Party, on the other hand, had a convincing national program and an efficient organization; and it had campaigned actively to make its policies known. As the *Mail* remarked (May 7, 1925), Swarajists realized that "the day of drawing room politics" had passed and that "politicians must now come out into the market place to secure votes, and, what is more important still, to cry their political wares." The Justice Party, with no organization to speak of and no skill in campaigning, had really made no attempt to stave off inevitable defeat.[13]

[11] R. V. Krishna Ayyar, *In the Legislature of Those Days*, p. 84.

[12] The *Madras Mail* commented on Nov. 16, 1926, after the elections: "The real reason underlying the results in Madras are the dissatisfaction of communities whose hopes have been disappointed — inevitably we think — and the disgust of men of moderate views with the results of communalism as a Party creed."

[13] Perhaps the only major innovation in Justice organization as a result of proddings was the adoption of a constitution which provided for an

At the annual Justice confederation in Madura in December, 1926, party leaders held a postmortem on the reasons for its defeat. A. P. Patro, the former Education Minister, again stated that the elections had shown that without regular and proper organization, Justice opinions had no chance of reaching the electorate. Moreover, if the Justice Party was to remain a viable political organism it would have to make sustained appeals to young people and establish youth leagues.[14] Somewhat belatedly, the party realized that it had never tried to attract young men, especially college students; indeed, unlike the Home Rule League and the noncooperation movement, the Justice Party had avoided such support, seeing it only as a threat to established authority. At the end of 1926, the demise of the party seemed very near.

The party tried to adopt a number of popular Congress policies. At the Madura confederation the conference *pandal* was decorated with placards reading "Long Live Mahatma Gandhi." At the same confederation an uncle of P. T. Rajan, an important Vellala Justice member, opened an exhibition of *khaddar*, and resolutions were duly passed urging members to use handwoven cloth and the *charka*; other resolutions advocated the removal of untouchability and a gradual introduction of prohibition of alcohol. This *volte face* of the Justice Party in adopting symbols and policies which had wide public appeal, but to which it had hitherto been opposed, indicated to many members that the only solution to the party's problems of survival was to join Congress. K. V. Reddi Naidu had earlier pointed out the great advantages of such an alliance as a way of gaining all-India recognition for the party, even though he remained adamantly opposed to non-

"exhaustive organization of the Presidency for Justice propaganda," at the Justice Party Confederation. *Ibid.*, Dec. 22, 1925. Very little seems to have come of this effort.

[14] *Hindu*, Dec. 27, 1926. For Patro's assessment of the Justice Party's contribution, see A. P. Patro, "The Justice Movement in India," *Asiatic Review*, N.S. XXVIII (January, 1932), 27–49.

cooperation. The *Hindu* and the *Mail* also recommended a more national outlook for the party.[15] At the 1926 Madura confederation the Subjects Committee discussed at length the question of introducing a resolution on the subject of joining Congress, but the opposition was too strong and the resolution was dropped.[16] Some of the ambivalence of the Justice Party's position in south Indian politics was demonstrated by the actions of the Rajah of Panagal at a Justice conference at Mayavaram in May, 1927. As he unveiled a portrait of Gandhi, the Rajah used the words, "Mr. Gandhi." Others on the platform hastened to tell him that he must say, "Mahatma Gandhi," but he refused to do so. Yet in speaking of Gandhi, Panagal admitted that "whether one agreed with his political views or not, there was absolutely no doubt that there was a great force behind the man" and that he had "all the outward appearances of a great soul force."[17]

These rather feeble attempts to adopt the most popular aspects of the Congress program without actually joining forces with Congress culminated in a Special Confederation of the Justice Party which met at Coimbatore on July 1, 1927, in order to decide whether or not Justice members should be permitted to join Congress. Agreement on this proposition was not easily reached, however, and on the second day of the meeting the discussion in the Subjects Committee over the proposed form of the resolu-

[15] "We have always deplored," wrote the *Mail* on July 2, 1927, "the indifference of South Indian Non-Brahmans towards the Central Legislature. Their efforts have been mainly concentrated on securing representatives in the Provincial Council; the Assembly and the Council of State [in Delhi] were regarded as of minor importance and easily captured by the opposition. The events of the last few years have, however, proved, that no Provincial Party can afford to ignore the Central Legislature; all-India events and laws occupy far more of the public attention than local matters . . . and the Party which neglects central affairs is ensuring that it in turn shall be neglected."

[16] *Hindu*, Dec. 29, 1926.

[17] *Ibid.*, May 9, 1927.

tion lasted for six and a half hours. Characteristically, the Justice leaders settled on a compromise motion, hoping this would bring them the best of both worlds. The resolution made it "permissible for such non-Brahmans as desire to do so to join the Congress maintaining intact the individuality of the Justice Party." On the following day, V. Chakkarai Chetti, an Indian Christian, formerly a member of the M.P.A., submitted a lengthy resolution, the conclusion of which read: "whereas it is . . . also necessary that steps should be taken to correctly interpret and spread the ideals and objects of the movement, this Confederation while exhorting all non-Brahmins to join the S.I.L.F. [Justice Party] gives liberty to such of the members of the S.I.L.F. as are willing to join the Congress and other similar organizations to do so." The resolution was approved unanimously.[18]

Chakkarai Chetti told the meeting that in bringing forward this resolution he hoped to establish harmony among all non-Brahmans, whether in the Congress or in the Justice Party. In so speaking, he was addressing three important non-Justice politicians who were in attendance: Tiru. Vi. Kaliyanasundaram Mudaliar, P. Varadarajulu Naidu, and E. V. Ramaswami Naicker. As distinguished non-Brahman leaders, they had been invited to participate in the business of the confederation and even to take sides on whether or not Justice members should be allowed to join Congress. Varadarajulu Naidu contributed little except to suggest that *swaraj*—and the decline of Brahman power—should be the ultimate goal for India. Ramaswami Naicker was much more outspoken. Foreshadowing his later activities, he made a strong speech in Tamil condemning the Governor of Madras for appointing C. P. Ramaswami Iyer, a Brahman, as Law Member of the Executive Council; he even sought to introduce a resolution urging the recall of the Governor, but friends prevailed upon him to tone down his language and to withdraw

[18] *Ibid.* (weekly ed.), July 7, 1927.

the recall motion. The same confederation also passed another resolution which later caused the Justice Party considerable embarrassment. This resolution, submitted by Tanikachala Chetti, proposed that the Justice Party should refuse office in the Legislative Council until provincial autonomy was granted to the presidency.

Bewildered by the turn of events, Justicites reacted in a number of different ways. Some were unwilling to forfeit the party's integrity and identity. K. V. Reddi Naidu, for example, who wanted greater all-India recognition for the party but refused to spin, was bitterly scornful of the Coimbatore resolutions:

> For six long years we resisted the temptation of yielding to the siren song of the charka. Our ministers have declared from their responsible place in the Council that hand-spinning is uneconomic. They refused permission to introduce the charka into any Government or aided school . . . For six years . . . while we were in power we never admired the political greatness of Mr. Gandhi or his statemanship. We never spoke of him as Mahatma . . . We have condemned his theories and mocked his methods. Of all parties in India, ours is the only one which had openly attacked his non-cooperation movement, and attacked it successfully. We prided [ourselves] both in Legislative Council and outside that it was on account of our opposition that N.C.O. made no headway, in fact it was defeated in our province.[19]

Some days after the conclusion of the Coimbatore confederation, Reddi Naidu issued a statement in Rajahmundry in which he reiterated his dismay at the resolution passed at the confederation. With reorganization, he said, the Justice Party still had the possibility of a political future. Above all, he deplored Tanikachala Chetti's proposal that the Justice Party should refuse to form a ministry unless provincial autonomy was granted.[20]

Many Justicites, on the other hand, welcomed the opportunity of joining a well-organized, nationalist-minded political group.

[19] *Ibid.*

[20] *Ibid.*, July 11, 1927.

Others, still preoccupied with enhancing the position of non-Brahmans, were ready to join Congress for the purpose of continuing the fight against Brahman domination.[21] Kumaraswami Reddiar, who was chairman of the Special Confederation at Coimbatore, argued that Justicites were being permitted to enter Congress so that they could "capture it" and use it for non-Brahman ends. This attitude was echoed by Tanikachala Chetti at a meeting in Gokhale Hall in Madras at which a number of Justicites indicated that they intended to join Congress, when he said that this step was being taken in an attempt to purge Congress of the "unholy influence of the south Indian Brahmin."[22] Years later, A. Kumaraswami Tampoe, a Justice member and an I.C.S. officer asserted that the Justicites who joined Congress in 1927 "were to a great extent the good men of the party," who did so with the specific purpose of reducing the "Brahmin domination of the Congress Party in the South."[23]

The passage of the Coimbatore resolution permitting Justice members to enter Congress was an important event in Justice affairs. In the Telugu areas it had little effect, but in Tamil areas it meant important changes. In July, V. Ramdas, an Andhra Congress member, predicted that there would be little change in Congress strength in Andhra "for the reason that the leading Non-Brahmin communities of Kammas and Kapoos were already largely pro-Congress and the anti-Congressmen among them were still dominated by leaders like Sir K. V. Reddi who do not favour Congress entry." But, he said, "In the Tamil Nadu, Non-Brahmins will enlist as Congressmen in large numbers; and it is not unlikely that serious efforts will be made to alter the present composition of the Congress organisation in . . . Tamil

[21] *Ibid.* (weekly ed.), July 7, 1927.
[22] *Ibid.*, July 11, 1927.
[23] Written statement given to the author by A. Kumaraswami Tampoe, Nov. 24, 1962.

Nadu especially of the Provincial Congress Committee."[24] His analysis of the situation proved to be largely correct. In October, K. V. Reddi Naidu established a separate wing of the Justice Party which he called the South Indian Liberal Federation (Constitutionalists).[25] It would continue to fight for the original aims of the Justice Party, and its existence would remove the concern that many non-Brahmans felt about the resolutions passed at Coimbatore condemning the Governor and stating the Justice Party's unwillingness to take office unless provincial autonomy was granted.[26]

A great many non-Brahmans from Tamil Nad did join Congress at this time, partly because of the Justice Party's resolution, partly for other reasons. In December, 1927, the annual Congress session was held in Madras for the first time since 1914, and it stimulated considerable interest among the younger men in Madras. A year later, on December 16, 1928, the Rajah of Panagal died of influenza.[27] His death meant that one of the last important links with the old Justice Party had been severed. It was really the end of the party, though for eight more years it led a twilight existence and even held office, between 1930 and 1936, first under B. Munuswami Naidu, a Telugu Kamma from Chittoor district, and then under the Rajah of Bobbili, a Telugu Velama from Vizagapatam district.

For all its limitations, however, the Justice Party had greatly consolidated the position of the non-Brahman caste Hindus. By fighting for communal representation in the Legislature, and by proving that non-Brahmans could contest elections successfully

[24] *Hindu* (weekly ed.), July 28, 1927.

[25] *Ibid.*, Oct. 27, 1927.

[26] *Manifesto of the South Indian Liberal Federation (Constitutionalists)* (Madras, 1928), p. 7.

[27] A brief biography of the Rajah of Panagal can be found in *The Justice Year Book, 1929*, ed. T. A. V. Nathan (n.p., n.d.), Part II, pp. 3–6. *Justice* of Dec. 17, 1928, contains a great many eulogies of Panagal, indicative of his wide circle of friends.

and survive without government assistance, the Justice Party had given non-Brahmans the confidence they so needed.[28] Bepin Chandra Pal stressed this point in an interview in the *Madras Mail* (Jan. 25, 1926) in which he maintained that caste rivalry in Madras contributed to the development of a democratic political system:

> During the last few years the non-Brahmins have acquired almost an inconceivable measure of confidence in themselves. At one time when the "Justice" Party . . . was organised, it leaned openly towards the Bureaucracy. They were against the popular movement then because it was in their Presidency in any case, led by the Brahmins, and they were unwilling to strive for any rapid advance to a popular system of Government as they feared that the result of it would be to increase Brahmanical ascendancy in politics. But this attitude seems to have completely changed today. The psychology of this change was the confidence of the non-Brahmin leaders in the strength of their own movement and party. The Reforms in Madras have proved to the non-Brahmin that he need no longer stand in fear of being overwhelmed by the Brahmins. . . . This is why they no longer talk of keeping the British masters over their heads to protect them from Brahmanical ascendancy.

These considerations, said Bepin Chandra, led him to formulate a new estimate of the Justice Party and the non-Brahman movement in general, since "the growing consciousness of nationalism and recognition of the larger national interests overriding all

[28] In the 1920 elections the non-Brahmans won more than twice the number of Council seats reserved for them. *Justice* on May 23, 1928, printed an editorial against the retention of the reserved seats that Dr. T. M. Nair and Venkata Reddi Naidu worked so long to get. "Not only has no good resulted from it, but the system has been so much misrepresented by political opponents, and so little understood by those outside this province, that the brand of inferiority has been most unjustly laid on the non-Brahmins, and their return to the Councils is marred by the recollection of an electoral advantage which is as futile as it is fugitive."

petty caste or communal interests will gradually bring about a union of the Brahmins and non-Brahmins in politics, though perhaps not yet in society." Though the effects of the Communal G.O.s were only beginning to show in the relative proportions of Brahmans and non-Brahman caste Hindus in the government employment table, the Justice Party had amply demonstrated that non-Brahmans were not inferior in political life but could hold their own, and even coerce a government that they had at one time courted. A new feeling of self-assurance and even superiority, which many in the 1920's saw as being characteristic of a new oligarchy, was beginning to express itself,[29] and with this security non-Brahmans in the Justice Party were becoming critical of the party's limited objectives and turning rather to Congress policies, particularly handspinning and *satyagraha*, for inspiration.

Swarajists, Congress, and Independence for India

Long before Gandhi placed before the country a plan of civil disobedience as a way of forcing the British government to grant India its freedom, the Congress passed through an important series of events which set the course of all-India politics for some years to come. By the middle of 1925, Gandhi realized that he could not control Congress, and in July of that year he gave over the entire Congress machinery to Motilal Nehru for the use of the Swarajists. Almost immediately, however, the elder Nehru was confronted with the formation of a group within Swaraj

[29] *Sampad Abhudaya*, Aug. 15, 1924, wrote: "The Brahman hierarchy exploited the religions of the masses for ages past. There they exploited them as their intellectual leaders, and agents of the foreigners. In their place today grows a non-Brahman hierarchy and intellectual bourgeois. Both are the enemies of the exploited masses." (*Madras NNR, 1924.*) *Hitavadi*, Sept. 22, 1923, wrote: "A notorious instance is the non-Brahman movement from which much was expected but it has created in effect a new oligarchy as well organized as the Brahman oligarchy which it sought to replace." (*Madras NNR, 1923.*) See also E. V. Ramaswami Naicker's comments on the non-Brahman movement in the *Madras Mail*, June 7, 1927, and the editorials in *ibid.*, for Aug. 31 and Nov. 19, 1923.

Party ranks called the Cooperative Responsivists. This group refused to be bound by Swarajist doctrine which demanded that the Councils should be entered but destroyed from within; some members contested the 1926 elections and accepted office. The most interesting example was S. B. Tambe, a senior member of the Central Provinces Swaraj Party, who accepted office as an Executive Councillor of that province.

In Madras, reversing the trend in other provinces in India, these two wings of the Congress—the Swarajists and the Responsivists—won forty-one seats in the 1926 elections. (In 1923 the Swarajists had won only eleven seats.) Their success was due in part to the decline of the Justice Party but even more to the vigorous and successful campaigning of S. Srinivasa Iyengar and S. Satyamurti.[30] Rajagopalachariar had temporarily retired from Madras politics because of his differences of opinion with Satyamurti and Srinivasa Iyengar over noncooperation,[31] though he continued his close relationship with Gandhi. In 1925–1926, Congress politics throughout India were becoming more and more identified with Swarajist politics; noncooperation and other Gandhian policies appeared to be fading, and Council entry seemed to be almost the accepted policy.

The Swaraj Party in Madras was clearly in a position of strength after the 1926 elections, but its role in provincial politics was severely complicated by the Justice Party's attacks on Brahmanism as well as by the latter's willingness to take office. Srinivasa Iyengar, a Sri Vaishnava Brahman like Rajagopalachariar, became more and more the target of attacks from *Justice* and other papers, and after he was elected president of the Indian National Congress at its annual session in Gauhati in December, 1926, *Justice* began to hammer away at what it called his Brah-

[30] See S. Srinivasa Iyengar, *His Presidential Address of the 41st Indian National Congress and Other Speeches* (Madras, 1927), pp. 1–36.

[31] See the proceedings of the Congress meeting at Triplicane beach in the *Hindu*, Nov. 19, 1916.

manical communalism.[32] The unusual success of the Swarajists in the Madras Council elections put them in a paradoxical situation. Between 1923 and 1926 they had sought rather unsuccessfully to undermine the power of the Justice ministry. After 1926, with a ministry composed of Independents, which if deposed would certainly be replaced by a Justice ministry, the Swarajists were compelled to abandon their obstructionist tactics. To keep the Justicites from entering office, they voted against a no-confidence motion leveled at the Independent ministry—a move which, under the circumstances, seemed the lesser of two evils. The action was severely criticized by *Justice* but also by Swarajists elsewhere in India as being no more than a perpetuation of the very dyarchical system that the Swaraj Party was supposed to destroy. Indeed, the vote was in direct violation of a resolution passed at the Gauhati session of 1926, which asked Congress members to oppose "the formation of a Ministry by other parties until in the opinion of the Congress or the All-India Congress Committee a satisfactory response is made by the government to the National Demand."[33] *Justice* was sneering: "Before the cock crew," it wrote, "the Madras Swarajists have thrice denied their master."[34] A series of editorials entitled "An Open Letter to the A.I.C.C.," by Ramaswami Mudaliar, *Justice* editor, further criticized this action.[35] The Working Committee of the A.I.C.C. demanded an explanation from the Madras Swarajists for its action in disobeying the Gauhati resolution. But at the meeting of the Working Committee Madras Congress members made a successful appeal by arguing the point

[32] See the comments in *Tamil Nadu*, Sept. 19, 1926 (*Madras NNR, 1926*). Also "The Assembly and the Congress President," *Justice*, Apr. 5, 1927, in A. Ramaswami Mudaliar, *Mirror of the Year: Being a Collection of the Leading Articles in Justice, 1927* (Madras, 1928), pp. 318–324.

[33] Quoted in "Naked and Unabashed," undated *Justice* editorial in *ibid.*, p. 18.

[34] *Ibid.*

[35] Undated editorials from *Justice* in *ibid.*, pp. 77–105.

that if the Independent ministry had been toppled, the inevitable Justice ministry would have strengthened dyarchy even more.

To complicate the political picture still further, the British government announced on November 8, 1927, that a Statutory Commission would undertake an appraisal of the existing constitutional structure and make recommendations for its revision. Strong opposition to this Commission was expressed from the start, in the beginning even by *Justice*,[36] because it was made up entirely of British personnel and this was felt to be an insult to India's aspirations and integrity.

The Congress session which met in Madras shortly after the British government's announcement passed several radical resolutions. One resolution called for a boycott of the Statutory Commission (called the Simon Commission after its chairman, Sir John Simon). At this session also Jawaharlal Nehru introduced a resolution making independence the goal of Congress. Another resolution called for Hindu–Muslim unity and promised Muslims communal electorates in the future constitution of India. Despite the strong terms in which these resolutions were couched, there was no real unity of opinion, however, except on the boycotting of the Simon Commission, and the following year was to see the culmination of a long series of debates between Hindus and Muslims and between those who favored complete independence as the goal of Congress and those who favored dominion status.

Throughout 1928, when the Simon Commission was boycotted by Congress marchers in Madras, Bombay, and Calcutta, events

[36] Ramaswami Mudaliar wrote in *Justice* (Nov. 27, 1927): "We trust that Indians of all shades of opinion will give expression to their views in time. If, in spite of their views, a Royal Commission is thrust on them by an expiring government, they have the remedy in their own hands of making it a ridiculous and innocuous body. They will resolve that no self-respecting individual will place his views before that body, and that no association which makes a pretense of representing public opinion, will send its delegates to give evidence before that body." *Ibid.*, p. 280.

steadily moved toward a climax.[37] The elder Nehru, who had been in Europe when his son introduced the Independence resolution at the Madras Congress session, tried to gain backing for a counter constitutional statement entitled *All Parties Conference, 1928: Report of the Committee Appointed by the Conference to Determine the Principles of the Constitution for India*, which specifically opposed two of the Madras Congress session resolutions. Instead of complete independence, it recommended the adoption of dominion status as the goal of Congress. Second, it demanded that communal electorates "must . . . be discarded completely as a condition precedent to any rational system of representation. We can only have joint or mixed electorates."[38] For areas in the Punjab and Bengal where the Muslims were in the majority, the *Report* contended that it was

> absurd to insist on reservation of seats for the majority and claim full responsible government at the same time. Responsible government is understood to mean a government in which the executive is responsible to the legislature and the legislature to the electorate. If the members of the executive with the majority behind them have all got in by reservation and not by free choice of the electorate there is neither representation of the electorate nor any foundation for responsible government. Reservation of seats for a majority community gives to that community the statutory right to govern the country independently of the wishes

[37] In Madras a car was burned and a shop was bombed; then the police opened fire on a crowd, killing three persons (*Hindu*, Feb. 4, 1928). But members of the Commission were fairly sanguine about the demonstrations. Sir John Simon said, "I think the presence of the occasional and peripatetic black-flagger really serves to emphasize the general cheerfulness of the population." Viscount Burnham, another member of the Commission, said, "Even children were carrying black flags smiling all over." *Ibid.* (weekly ed.), Mar. 15, 1928.

[38] *All Parties Conference, 1928: Report of the Committee* (Allahabad, 1928), pp. 100–101, 30.

> of the electorate and is foreign to all conceptions of popular government.[39]

A denial of communal electorates and the reservation of seats for Muslims by the Nehru *Report* immediately alienated not only the conservative Muslim leader Sir Muhammad Shafi but also Mohammad Ali Jinnah, who, though more liberal and personally opposed to communal electorates, was supported by many Muslims who favored them. The *Hindu* (Jan. 1, 1929) sympathized with Jinnah's predicament but pointed out that if the demand were conceded other communities would press for changes and the *Report* would "again be in the melting pot."

The younger Nehru, Jawaharlal, who introduced the Independence resolution at the Madras Congress session, had the support of Srinivasa Iyengar and Subas Chandra Bose, and in 1928 the three men formed an Independence for India League within Congress to fight for independence rather than for the dominion status recommended by the Nehru *Report*. As *hartals* and the boycott of the Simon Commission began to quicken the tempo of political action in 1928, Gandhi, who regarded the Independence resolution as premature and ill-conceived, decided to re-enter active political life. His first public appearance came at the annual Congress session at Calcutta in December. The two opposed wings of Congress, one represented by Bose, the younger Nehru, and Srinivasa Iyengar, and the other represented by the elder Nehru, Congress president, were now in direct confrontation, and a serious split threatened. Gandhi, realizing what could happen to the Congress position if prompt and conciliatory steps were not taken, stepped in as arbitrator. The first scene of battle was the Subjects Committee. Gandhi introduced a resolution carefully worded so as to conciliate both sides: Congress would accept the Nehru *Report*, but if dominion status were not granted within two years

[39] *Ibid.*, pp. 42–43.

it would change its position to a demand for independence. The Independence wing insisted that the period of grace must be only one year, not two, and the compromise was sealed when permission was granted to the Independence wing to carry on propaganda for independence under the Congress banner. Bose made an unsuccessful attempt in the general meeting to alter the resolution to one demanding complete independence as the immediate goal of the Congress, and the delegates went on to approve a resolution stating that if dominion status were not given to India by December 31, 1929, the Congress would revive nonviolent noncooperation "by advising the country to refuse taxation and every other aid to the Government."[40]

It was obvious to most people that the British government would not grant India dominion status within a year. It was also obvious that the only person capable of leading a noncooperation struggle against the government was Gandhi. Thus the Congress decision to endorse the resolution opened the way for what was to be the first real all-India attempt to wrest power from the British, and at the same time it placed Gandhi and his many followers at the head of the struggle throughout India.

Rajagopalachariar, who had lost power to Satyamurti and Srinivasa Iyengar, became Gandhi's main exponent in Tamil Nad after the program of noncooperation was put into operation in 1930. When Srinivasa Iyengar returned to Madras from Calcutta in January, 1929, he resigned as president of the Tamil Nad Congress Committee, apparently because Gandhi had asked him to work with Rajagopalachariar in the forthcoming noncooperation compaign—a prospect that would have been intolerable to Srinivasa Iyengar.[41] C. N. Muthuranga Mudaliar, a Vellala, was elected

[40] J. Coatman, *India in 1928–29* (Calcutta, 1930), pp. 50–52. I was also assisted in my understanding of the Independence faction of Congress by an interesting unpublished paper by Stephen N. Hay, "Communist Influence on the Indian National Movement in the 1920's."

[41] See the narrative in K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar, *S. Srinivasa Iyengar: The*

to replace him. The choice of a non-Brahman for this important position was indicative of the change that had taken place in Congress politics in Tamil Nad between 1925 and 1929, and in the 1930's Muthuranga Mudaliar was to play an important role in T.N.C.C. affairs.

For the first time since Mrs. Besant's Home Rule movement, the Tamil-speakers of south India were involved in a national enterprise for securing India's freedom. In many ways, the decline of the Justice Party and the absorption of many non-Brahman Hindus by the Congress in 1927–1928 helped to modify the former polarity between provincial and nationalist loyalties within Tamil Nad. Even though many non-Brahmans who entered Congress did so for provincial, non-Brahman aims, the already well-established Congress organization, with a clearly defined national policy, was large enough for them and they were able to follow their own interests without interfering seriously with the national policy of Congress. Perhaps the success of their efforts was best epitomized in the election of the non-Brahman Muthuranga Mudaliar to the presidency of the T.N.C.C. in 1929. But the continued existence of the Justice Party, however weak, for a time seriously impinged on the activities of the Madras Swarajists in that it forced them to help maintain the existing dyarchic system of government. It was only with Gandhi's return to political life and his increasing control of Congress affairs that the Justice–Swarajist conflict was resolved.

Despite outward appearances, the polarity between national and provincial loyalties persisted. Many non-Brahmans who left the Justice Party for Congress were torn between their identifica-

Story of a Decade of Indian Politics (Mangalore, 1939), pp. 82–89; also my interview with G. V. Subba Rao, Dec. 18, 1962. See also Es. Ampujammāḷ, *Eṉ tantaiyār* ["My Father"] (Madras, 1945), pp. 82–85. Srinivasa Iyengar's remarkable changes in political orientation and fortune caused Khasa Subba Rau to call him a man of "incalculable possibilities." *Men in the Limelight* (Madras, 1941), p. 9.

tion with the Tamil country and their loyalties to the nation, and often, in the years to come, wavered from one to the other. In many respects these two loyalties were represented in the years after 1925 by the Congress with its nationalist ideals and the Self-Respect movement, a social reform movement oriented toward enhancing the position of Tamil and Tamilians.

The Birth of Self-Respect

Ramaswami Naicker's break with Congress in 1925 came essentially as a result of his insistence on a showdown between Brahmans and non-Brahmans. As he told the party caucus, it was foolish to act as if there were no division between Brahman and non-Brahman. It was the basis of all his propaganda. The Self-Respect movement—*Suyamariyātai iyakkam*—was dedicated to the goal of giving non-Brahmans a sense of pride based on their Dravidianist past, which also meant a denial of the superiority of the Brahman and of the Brahman's implicit faith in the system. As Ramaswami Naicker put it in his Tamil-language newspaper *Kudi Arasu*: "every Brahman in this country considers he belongs to a superior caste according to the principle of *varnashrama* and that the rest are 'Sudras' and the same principle makes him believe that he should not teach the 'Sudra' and that, if he does so, he will go to hell."[42] Unlike the Justice Party, the Self-Respect movement was popular in its appeal. Though it began as a social reform movement, its effects were ultimately profoundly political. Ramaswami Naicker's followers believed that "self-respect should come before self-rule" and the fulfillment of this belief was viewed as a matter of great urgency. One Self-Respect paper put it succinctly: "A new understanding of the values of life, a genuine feeling of resentment against those who would have the accident of birth accepted as the one and only criterion of personal worth, a sincere recognition of the fact that much of what passes for

[42] *Kudi Arasu*, July 7, 1929 (*Madras NNR, 1929*).

religion and piety is nothing short of gross and grotesque superstition foisted and feeding upon the ignorance and credulity of the unsophisticated—these are the outstanding features of the awakened popular mind of the present day."[43] The movement sought to "turn the present social system topsy-turvy and establish a living bond of union among all people irrespective of caste or creed,"[44] including the untouchables. One of the essential points was a denial of the mythology of Puranic Hinduism, by which the unsuspecting were made victims of the Brahmans. And it was the Brahman as the leader of the social and religious life of Tamil Nad who was the target of Self-Respect attacks: the Brahman was to blame for the present state of the Tamil country, with its highly stratified social system and its vast social distance between Brahman and untouchable, since it was the Brahman who had supposedly introduced all that was impure and foreign into the once-pure Tamil or Dravidian culture. Self-Respecters upheld a total disbelief in the religious validity of Brahmans, and "Self-Respect weddings," celebrated without the use of Brahman priests, became common, despite doubts that were expressed as to their validity in a court of law.[45]

The leader of the Self-Respect movement, Ramaswami Naicker, the hero of Vykom, had been one of the first members of the M.P.A. in 1917, then a leader of the noncooperation campaign, sternly opposed to Council entry, and, in the early 1920's, an important political agitator, as at Vykom when he defended the rights of the untouchables.[46] His dislike of the Brahmans was of many years' standing, dating from a visit he made to Benares as

[43] *Revolt*, July 21, 1929 (*Madras NNR, 1929*).

[44] *Ibid.*, June 23, 1929 (*Madras NNR, 1929*).

[45] For accounts of such weddings see *Justice*, June 12 and 28 and Aug. 31, 1928.

[46] Perhaps his first involvement with politics was to join a protest meeting in Erode against the Madras government for levying security against Mrs. Besant's *New India*. See the *Hindu*, June 1, 1916.

a young man. He was the son of Kannada Balija Naidu parents, from Erode, and knew Kannada, Tamil, and Telugu, though he had no schooling beyond the age of ten. In 1904, when he was a young bridegroom of twenty-five, he went to Benares. It was, he discovered, no holier than any other city. The Brahmans there ate meat and drank toddy, and prostitution was a going business.[47] As a Congress member, he supported the use of *khaddar* and advocated the removal of untouchability, and during his years in the T.N.C.C. he opposed the Brahmans on numerous issues, including the Gurukulam affair. Communal representation led to his break with Congress in 1925. Shortly thereafter he began to use meetings of the Justice Party to expound his views on self-respect and social equality. On many occasions he criticized the Justice Party for ignoring social reform. Never since its formation, he told one meeting in Coimbatore in December, 1925, had the Justice Party "laid down any programme for the benefit of the masses and that was the main reason why it had not the support of the people who form the bulk of the population."[48]

S. Ramanathan, the second important leader of the movement, a much younger man than Ramaswami Naicker, was a Tamil Vellala, college-educated but nonetheless close to Ramaswami Naicker in his views. He became attracted to the Gandhian program soon after leaving college; he canvassed support for the *khaddar* program and was opposed to Council entry, and in 1926 he was placed in charge of promoting *khaddar* in Tamil Nad.[49] Though he stayed on in Congress until 1927, he, too, was disgusted by what he felt to be Brahman intransigence and exclusiveness in the T.N.C.C., and he was attracted by the social ideals of the Self-Respect movement. In an unusual book which is a bitter denunciation of Gandhi, Ramanathan describes his early

[47] For Ramaswami Naicker's early life see Sitamparaṉār, *Tamiḻar talaivar* ["Tamilians' Leader"], pp. 13–61.

[48] *Madras Mail*, Dec. 19, 1925.

[49] *Hindu* (weekly ed.), Feb. 16, 1926.

humiliation at discovering the extent of caste prejudice in south India. He and a group of college friends had gone on a holiday outing to the Red Hills lake, a reservoir near Madras city:

> There was swimming and play until we got quite exhausted and hungry. We had arranged food at a Brahmin house. We trooped in with ravenous looks. Every one was admitted, but I was stopped at the gate. I was no Brahmin. I was told I should be served outside after the others had finished. I felt I was struck in my face. The shock overwhelmed me and I grew sick with anger. I did not mind the messkeeper. But, my friends! It dawned upon me for the first time that they were all Brahmins. They knew that I was kept out. They did not mind, because it was the custom. It was a matter of course. The lower castes must wait and take their turn after the higher castes are satisfied. That might be all right for others. But how could my friends, so refined, so sensitive, how could they tolerate this monstrous practice? Should I rush in and create a scene? Should I thrash my pals for having connived at this insult offered to me? I turned away from that house, and hid myself under a tree and wept.[50]

Both Ramaswami Naicker and S. Ramanathan had considerable training as organizers along with their strong sense of social injustice. They knew the art of public appeal and could speak in terms that the masses understood. Many of the original Self-Respect leaders, such as Ramanathan and Ramaswami Naicker, came—as did some of the Justice leaders—from non-Brahman caste Hindu groups like the Vellalas and the Balija Naidus which were relatively high in the Tamil ritual status. But the tone of the movement was determined by Ramaswami Naicker, who represented a new type of leader in the Tamil country, uneducated in English and able to speak in Tamil only in the popular idiom. Though in the earlier years there was some interchange between

[50] S. Ramanathan, *Gandhi and the Youth* (2d ed.; Bombay, 1947), pp. 3–4.

the Justice Party and the Self-Respect movement,[51] the latter did not in the main draw its support from the same groups that supported the Justice Party. Justice leadership came for the most part from landowning groups and *zamindars*, and the bulk of membership and funds were drawn from middle and upper middle class caste Hindus in both Tamil and Telugu areas. The Self-Respect movement concentrated almost entirely on the Tamil districts, primarily on the groups low in the caste hierarchy, including the untouchables, for whom the social reform platform would have the most appeal. Special efforts were also directed at women and young people,[52] to whom the Justice leaders turned only after they lost the 1926 elections. One caste group which became very important in Madras in the 1950's, the Vaniya Kula Kshatriyas, traditionally oil-pressers, was first mobilized by the Self-Respect movement in the 1920's.[53] The directness and simplicity of Self-Respect propaganda were especially attractive to the semi-educated in the rural areas and to those newly urbanized persons who had little sense of identity and no skills by which to acquire wealth and prestige. Neither the Justice Party nor Congress had ever paid any attention to these groups, and it was not surprising that the Self-Respect movement should assume great significance for them.

The organ of the Self-Respect movement was the Tamil-language weekly newspaper *Kudi Arasu* ("People's Government") which Ramaswami Naicker began in May, 1924. It was specifically directed at certain non-Brahman groups that had not been reached by the Justice Party's *Dravidan*. "Unlike other pa-

[51] J. S. Kannappar, the Balija Naidu editor of the Justice Party's *Dravidan*, and J. N. Ramanathan, a Vellala from Madura, did a great deal of publicity work for the movement.

[52] *Hindu*, Jan. 5, 1929; *Justice*, May 19, 1928.

[53] This caste group had already elevated itself somewhat in Tamilian society by gradually claiming new census classifications. See Lloyd and Susanne Rudolph, "The Political Role of India's Caste Associations," *Pacific Affairs*, XXXIII (March, 1960), 5–22.

pers," Ramaswami Naicker claimed, "[in this one] I will courageously say whatever I think to the public."[54] He was true to his promise. Many of the editorials were considered to be treasonable and inflammatory, and once he was imprisoned for attacking the government. He directed his main assaults at the Brahmans, however, and at the *Puranas*, the *Mahabharata*, and the *Ramayana*. In this context he wrote a great deal supporting Sundaram Pillai's interpretation of the *Ramayana*. Puranic literature, Naicker contended, was the product of Brahmanical scheming and unworthy of belief because it did not admit the equality of all men.[55] All these attacks—like Ramaswami Naicker's speeches—were in Tamil, of a sort that was at once terse and entirely comprehensible even to the uneducated. He was the first popularizer of the word *parppān*, the derogatory term for Brahman, implying cunningness and unworthiness.

In 1928 S. Ramanathan and S. Guruswami tried to broaden the appeal of the Self-Respect movement to include an English-reading public. Their daily, called *Revolt*, first appeared in November 1928. But the very fact of its being in English and edited by men of greater sophistication than Naicker meant that it was bound to have a smaller circulation than *Kudi Arasu*, and early in 1931 it ceased publication. Shortly after, Ramaswami Naicker began a Tamil daily called *Vidutalai* ("Freedom"), and in 1935 he started a Tamil monthly called *Paḳutarivu* ("Common Sense"). But in the late 1920's, *Kudi Arasu* was the movement's journalistic weapon.

The Progress of Self-Respect

Though the popularization of self-respect doctrines was a phenomenon of the late 1920's, the ideas had been articulated in a limited way by the Justice Party in the first days of the Justice movement under Dr. Nair. In 1917, for example, the *Dravidan*

[54] Quoted in Sitamparaṉār, *Tamiḻar talaivar*, p. 85.
[55] *Ibid.*, p. 114.

made this comment on the position of the Brahmans in the traditional social order of south India:

> The Brahmans whom we relied on for thousands of years past as our priests, submerged us in ignorance and were playing upon us conveniently . . . It is the establishment of English rule in India that enables us to occupy the position we are now in. It is because the rulers are high-souled Englishmen, that the cruel powers of the Brahman priesthood became ineffective. If, before they [the non-Brahmans] improve their knowledge, Home Rule is granted, it will be Brahman Rule that is given . . . The old drama will be played over again.[56]

In 1918, at a Justice conference in Madura, T. C. Tangavelu Pillai, the party's most outspoken anticlerical member, said, "If there be any among you who is a Brahmin, devoted and strictly religious, let him speak; to him I say, Brahminism, is not this country's religion, nor the Brahmin its priest." Instead, south Indians should "cultivate the true Dravidian spirit."[57] After Dr. Nair died and Tyagaraja Chetti became head of the Justice Party, such sentiments were seldom spoken in public even by such party members as still held them.

But after Tyagaraja Chetti's death in 1925, followed by the exit of Ramaswami Naicker from Congress and the defeat of the Justice Party in the Council elections of 1926, Ramaswami Naicker began to revive the old Justice interest in anticlerical opinions, urging the party to alter its limited social outlook and acquire mass appeal. Even K. V. Reddi Naidu at the Madura confederation of the Justice Party in December, 1926, questioned why Brahmans should "stand between God and the non-Brahmin," and a resolution was passed "requiring non-Brahmins to

[56] *Dravidan*, June 5, 1917 (*Madras NNR, 1917*).

[57] T. C. Tangavelu Pillai, *The Presidential Address Delivered at the Non-Brahmin Conference of the Madura District on the 13th October, 1918*, p. 17.

conduct ceremonies by trained and well-versed pandits and Purohits of their own caste," to replace the Brahmans who traditionally officiated at such ceremonies.[58] At the Justice conference in Mayavaram in Tanjore district the following May, Ramaswami Naicker himself moved a resolution that clearly enunciated the aims of his Self-Respect movement: "Since the observance of gradations of merit, based on birth, disintegrates national life and is an impediment to the realisation of self-government, this conference calls upon all non-Brahmins to discontinue the observance of caste distinctions, not to employ Brahmin priests in the celebration of marriages, and other ceremonies, to allow freedom of worship in temples, the use of public roads, tanks, and wells to all persons."[59]

Ramaswami Naicker's attitudes were hardened by a number of public utterances made by Gandhi on his visit to Tamil Nad in late 1927, shortly after the Justice Party had granted its members permission to enter Congress. Much of what Gandhi said was a repetition of his remarks on previous visits—which at the time had provoked considerable resentment among Tamilians. In April, 1921, Gandhi told a meeting in Madras that "In Madras I have not a shadow of doubt that Hinduism owes its all to the great traditions that the Brahmans have left for Hinduism . . . The Brahmins have declared themselves and they ought to remain the custodians of the purity of our life."[60] Four years later, in March, 1925, Gandhi said in Madras, "If you but follow Varnashrama Dharma in its spirit, we shall cease to be puny individuals and we shall walk in the fear of God."[61] Gandhi's enunciation of his belief in the sacred duty of *varnashrama dharma* alarmed Ramaswami Naicker and S. Ramanathan; they tried to persuade him to modify his position, but without success, and Ramaswami Naicker then broke with Gandhi. On August 28, 1927, he pub-

[58] *Hindu*, Dec. 29, 1926.
[59] *Ibid.*, May 11, 1927.
[60] *Hindu*, Apr. 11, 1921.
[61] *Ibid.*, Mar. 23, 1925.

lished an editorial in *Kudi Arasu* in which he called for the destruction of Congress, Hinduism, and Brahmanism.[62]

After a number of representations from non-Brahmans, Gandhi realized that his commitment to *varnashrama dharma* had created difficulties in the Tamil districts, and he sought to amplify his position. He admitted to one audience in September, 1927, that "as you are aware, though a non-Brahmin myself, I have lived more of my life with them and in their midst, than amidst non-Brahmins and on that account pardonably some of my non-Brahmin friends suspect me of having taken all my colourings from Brahmin friends."[63] But at the end of October he reaffirmed his "belief that Varnashrama Dharma is not an unmitigated evil but it is one of the foundations on which Hinduism is built," and that "Varnashrama Dharma defines man's mission on earth."[64]

The damage had been done. To many non-Brahmans in the Tamil country, *varnashrama dharma* could mean only one thing: the superiority of orthodox Brahmans over the rest of the population in the area. They refused to consider what Gandhi really meant when he spoke of *varnashrama dharma*. Even a Congressman of the stature of R. K. Shanmukham Chetti, a former Justicite and the first Finance Minister in post-Independence India, pointed out that Gandhi had not stopped at saying that the Brahman–non-Brahman problem was beyond his comprehension but had "proceeded to extol the hidden virtues of varnashrama dharma as he perceived them . . . Whatever he imported into it, ordinary people would understand it only in one way, viz., the accepted Shastraic implication of the several rungs in the ladder of Hindu social polity."[65] "It is not Mahatma Gandhi's Varnashrama," wrote Ramaswami Mudaliar in *Justice*, "that the world is concerned with and that the non-Brahmins are fighting against, but the Varnashrama Dharma which exists today in Southern

[62] Sitamparaṉār, *Tamiḻar talaivar*, pp. 102–103.
[63] *Hindu* (weekly ed.), Sept. 15, 1927.
[64] *Ibid.*, Oct. 27, 1927. [65] *Ibid.*, Oct. 6, 1927.

India and which forces them to accept unnumbered degradations."[66] Ramaswami Naicker was even more condemning of *varnashrama dharma* on the grounds that it involved in the Tamil country the relegation of all non-Brahman caste Hindus to the position of Sudras, and if each caste were to follow its own *dharma*, as Gandhi had suggested, the non-Brahmans would be forced to serve the Brahmans. "When we think of ourselves as Sudras," said Ramaswami Naicker, "we accept ourselves as sons of prostitutes."[67]

In the years that followed Gandhi's 1927 visit to Tamil Nad, the Self-Respect movement began to take an alarming turn. On a number of occasions the *Manusmriti* was burned, and the Rama–Ravana controversy was revised.[68] Rajagopalachariar was horrified at these attempts to "indulge in a suicidal crusade against the language, literature, the customs and the sacred books of Sanskrit including the Ramayana and Mahabharata. Ravana is held up as the hero and beau-ideal of good Dravidian conduct! Rama was a wicked and unjust Aryan."[69] Several attempts were made by J. N. Ramanathan, the son of Nallaswami Pillai, and J. S. Kannappar, one of those who had burned the *Manusmriti*, to worship at temples in Madura, Trichinopoly, and Madras.[70] Police were called in as protection against possible violence, and at times orders were issued prohibiting Ramanathan or Kannappar from worshipping in temples with outcaste followers.

Many persons viewed these activities as discouraging evidence of the slipping away of the familiar pattern of traditional religious and social life. K. S. Ramaswami Sastri, who had been responsible for helping to organize the Varnashrama Dharma movement in

[66] "Gandhi and Varnashrama," *Justice*, Oct. 14, 1927, in Ramaswami Mudaliar, *Mirror of the Year*, p. 153.

[67] Sitamparaṉār, *Tamiḻar talaivar*, p. 102.

[68] See the proceedings of the Self-Respect meeting at Lalgudi, where the *Manusmriti* was burned by J. S. Kannappar. *Justice*, June 12, 1928.

[69] *Hindu* (weekly ed.), Apr. 12, 1928.

[70] *Madras Mail*, Feb. 9, 1927; *Justice*, June 14, 1928; *ibid.*, July 7, 1928.

the Tamil country between 1915 and 1919, complained that the Self-Respect movement displayed little knowledge either of Self or of Respect and merely added new terrors to life.[71] There were many Vellalas who deplored the attacks on religion. One Vellala, Tī. Mu. Āṟumukam, published a pamphlet in 1929 entitled *Suyamariyātaikku ōr sūṭṭukoḷ* ("Criticism of Self-Respect") in defense of traditional religion. Another Vellala, E. N. Thanikachalam Mudaliar, a member of the Saiva Siddhanta Samajam, wrote a letter to the *Hindu* arguing that in the face of the threat posed by Self-Respect activity, Saiva Siddhanta still had a relevance to modern life.[72]

None of this criticism had much effect. The propaganda of the Self-Respect movement continued, and grew even sharper. Songs about Self-Respect leaders were printed and distributed,[73] and pamphlets were issued to explain the movement's aims. Some of these took the form of novels or short stories. One pamphlet, typical of many, which appeared in 1929 was called *Visittira tēvarkaḷ kōrṭṭu* ("Wonderful Court of Deities"). It used the device of a trial of all the gods of the Hindu pantheon, in which a court of law subjected them to a severe cross-examination of all the sexual and violent crimes they had committed. Shiva, Vishnu, and many other deities were convicted and given harsh sentences. In this way the entire basis of Puranic Hinduism was questioned and religion itself attacked as a superstition. There was also a poet, Bharati Dasan, a Vellala, who, like Subramania Bharati a decade earlier, wrote inspirational poetry in Tamil, in which he gave expression to his belief in social reform and Dravidian culture.[74]

[71] Foreword in V. S. Ramaswami Sastri and Dhurta Swamin, *The Brahmin* (Madras, 1929), p. xvii.

[72] *Hindu*, Mar. 9, 1929; see also *ibid.*, Apr. 30, 1929.

[73] See V. A. Siṉṉamaṉip Pākavataravarkaḷ, *Suyamarijātai talaivarkaḷmītu kītaṅkaḷ* ["Songs about Self-Respect Leaders"] (Virudnagar, 1930).

[74] Puratsik Kaviñar Pāratitāsan, *Pāratitāsaṉ kavitaikaḷ* ["Bharati Dasan's Poems"] (Ramachandrapuram, 1961), pp. 87–101.

Probably the most important of the early activities of the Self-Respect movement was the convening of the first Provincial Self-Respect Conference at Chingleput, a few miles from Madras, on February 17, 1929. The speeches and the resolutions at this conference reflected the different facets of the movement that had been articulated during the previous four years—its strong egalitarian bias and its determination to boycott Brahman priests, as well as its desire to attract young people and women, and above all its devotion to what it considered to be Dravidian civilization.

About three thousand people attended the conference, which had something of the air of a country fair. The Development Minister opened the agricultural exhibition; there were pumping and well-boring demonstrations, and exhibits by many private firms.[75] *A number of important Justice politicians were present,* and, rather curiously, three or four Brahmans; but the meeting was dominated by the ideas and personality of Ramaswami Naicker. P. Subaroyan, the Independent Chief Minister of Madras, set the tone in his opening speech:

> Religion as popularly understood among us Hindus, is liable to make us selfish, as we are always urged by an ignorant priesthood to think of our individual soul and its salvation and not for our fellow-beings. We do not for a moment stop to consider that it ought to be the aim of every real religion to make the world a better one to live in. This we can do, not by considering only our own selves, but also the well-being of our fellow-creatures. But this is precisely what a civilisation based on caste cannot do. It is the idea of making society better, which is the central aim of the Self-Respect League.[76]

What was necessary, Subaroyan argued, was the formation of a band of young men who would proselytize for Self-Respect in the same way as the Buddhists had done. M. K. Reddi, the chair-

[75] *Hindu,* Feb. 19, 1929.
[76] *Justice Year Book, 1929,* Section IV, p. 110.

man of the reception committee, also felt the necessity for a "thorough-based revolution," with a Luther, a Lenin, or a Mussolini to "purge the evils that have made such heavy inroads into society under the aegis of religion."[77]

Many resolutions were passed. One called on members to refuse money for the construction of temples or for the employment of priests or intermediaries. Another condemned *varnashrama dharma* and the arbitrary division of society into Brahmans, Kshatriyas, Vaisyas, Sudras, and Panchamas, and repudiated the belief in superiority based on the "accident of birth." Another—almost inevitable—condemned the use of all suffixes and terminations connotive of caste. And for the women, a resolution was passed claiming for them the same rights of inheritance as men and advocating that marriage should be terminable at the will of either party.[78]

The presidential speech, given by W. P. A. Soundara Pandya Nadar, made it clear that such a program was necessary because the Aryans, from the time of their arrival in the south, had "consolidated their position in our land," and had invented the caste system in order to prevent the Dravidians from overwhelming them. The greatness of Tamil literature was "demonstrated by the three Sangams of the Madura Tamil Academy which was fostered by the ancient Pandya kings, and [by the] valuable works of the poets of these Sangams." As for the great books of the Brahmans, the "Puranas, Ithihasas, Vedas, and Agamas, which naturally create dissension among people," they were, he said, "the false interpolations of an intermediate era. They are not the products of Tamilian wisdom" but mere "literary rubbish."[79] Another speaker argued that no funds should be given for "propagating the Vedas, Sanskrit or Hindi."[80]

Ideas of this kind spoken with the enthusiasm of a believer

[77] *Ibid.*, p. 114.
[78] *Ibid.*, pp. 131, 126, 128, 110, 129.
[79] *Ibid.*, pp. 119–120.
[80] *Ibid.*, p. 130.

were perhaps the natural outgrowth of the ideas, attitudes, and work of scholars and politicians over the previous half-century. For the Self-Respect movement represented the growing militancy of persons who, though trained by Gandhian noncooperation techniques, had assimilated the racial theories propounded by such men as Caldwell, Nelson, Grant-Duff, and Sundaram Pillai and hitherto given limited currency by the Justice Party. Yet the Self-Respect movement was a distinctly new development in south India, one that gave the concept of Dravidianism a new and broader attraction. The Self-Respect movement, unlike the Justice Party, was not hampered by the restrictions of wealth and orthodox religion, and it was ready to use inflammatory techniques to achieve its social and political ends. The most enduring of its aims was the elevation of Tamil and Tamil Nad to a new position of importance in relation to the north.

Self-Respect, Hindi, and Dravidistan

It was Congress that pulled the non-Brahman groups first politicized by the Justice Party into full-scale political agitation. In 1929 nationalist politics in the Tamil area were undergoing a transition from the Swarajist program of Council entry popularized by Srinivasa Iyengar and Satyamurti to one of noncooperation and boycott. The leaders of the new noncooperation movement were for the most part non-Brahmans, like C. Muthuranga Mudaliar, who had no connection either with the moribund Justice Party or with the Self-Respect movement. In 1929 and 1930 it was Congress that held the limelight and allowed non-Brahman caste Hindus to play an increasing role in the noncooperation struggles of 1930 and 1931.

Congress was not without its difficulties in 1929 in Tamil Nad, as can be seen by the resignation of Srinivasa Iyengar from the presidency of the T.N.C.C., the final withdrawal of Varadarajulu Naidu from his increasingly uncomfortable position in Congress,

and the continuing rivalry between Telugu and Tamil Congress organizations in Madras city.[81] Nonetheless, the Tamil-speaking area was becoming more and more ready to support a movement dedicated to fighting the government. The year 1929, therefore, marks another important watershed in Tamil politics, when Congress absorbed much of the manpower that made the civil disobedience campaign of the 1930's not only possible in the Tamil country but entirely successful. In the same year, however, the Self-Respect movement, endowed with the momentum of dynamic leadership and an even more dynamic ideology, was able to speak with reckless impunity at a provincial conference, articulating aims that were to have many later implications.

During the next few years, as the noncooperation campaign got under way, the Self-Respect movement gradually shifted to a more radical position. In May, 1931, at a meeting of the Self-Respect League at Lalgudi, S. Ramanathan, now president of the league and former editor of *Revolt*, delivered a powerful speech on "The Superstition of *Khadi*." It was essentially a sweeping attack on Gandhi's hand-operated technology. As the former head of the Khaddar Board in Tamil Nad, Ramanathan spoke with considerable knowledge, insight, and conviction.[82] In particular, he felt that *khadi* and the bogus patriotism that it represented were merely another form of superstition which Self-Respecters should feel bound to destroy. He was scathing in his remarks on Gandhi's handmade wooden plow, the inefficiency and cruelty of which he knew from his own experience: "I tell you no greater cruelty can be inflicted on an animal than by yoking it to the plough especially in our irrigated fields. The sight of bullocks being goaded by boys who are themselves struggling knee-deep in the mire challenges description. Often the bullocks finding them-

[81] See the *Hindu*, Aug. 10, Dec. 30, and Aug. 14, 1929.

[82] See his long articles disputing the facts of *khadi* with Rajagopalachariar in the *Hindu*, Oct. 9 and 26, 1929.

selves unequal to the task, lie down prostrate and perform Satyagraha."[83] It took a good deal of courage to speak this way at a time when Gandhi's name was hallowed and his methods largely unquestioned. The sensational speech resulted in a bitter quarrel between Ramanathan and the Khaddar Board chairmen in Andhra and Tamil Nad, both of whom denied Ramanathan's contentions.

Ramaswami Naicker, too, was becoming more outspoken. In 1931 he made a trip to Europe, where he visited Russia, Germany, England, and several other countries; on his return he broke with Ramanathan and thereafter his public statements were larded with rationalist and materialist jargon picked up abroad. Also at about this time he began to bolster Self-Respect propoganda with doctrines borrowed from the nineteenth-century American freethinker Colonel Robert Ingersoll. This was evidently due to the influence of C. N. Annadurai, a Tamil Vellala, fluent in English, who had read Ingersoll and been impressed.[84] Annadurai was a man of sophistication and undoubted ability, and Ramaswami Naicker granted him an increasingly important role in the decisions of the Self-Respect movement.

When the Government of India Act of 1935 came into effect and Congress accepted office in Madras under the chief ministership of C. Rajagopalachariar, a bill was introduced in the Madras Legislature that would make Hindi a compulsory subject in all the provincial schools. Professor Somasundara Bharati, the author of *Tamil Classics and Tamilakam* and long a staunch advocate of Tamil, protested vigorously in an *Open Letter* to Rajagopalachariar. A Congress member himself, Somasundara Bharati criticized Rajagopalachariar's attempts to "adversely affect the independence and individuality of the Tamil language and Tamil-

[83] S. Ramanathan *et al., The Superstition of Khadi: A Discussion* (Erode, 1931), p. 9.

[84] See Ram Gopal (ed.), *Selections from Ingersoll* (2 vols.; Bangalore, 1931). Many editions of Ingersoll's works appeared in India at this time.

ian or Dravidian culture as such."[85] Dravidian culture, he maintained, was distinct, and it should be preserved from Brahman infection:

> It is sheer camouflage to say that the Tamils have no cultural differences whatever with their Aryan brethren. Not only have the Aryanized North Indian Communities and the Dravidians of South India lived apart for centuries without any close contact and with sharp differences and contrasts between them noticable in every sphere and activity of communal life such as cultural, linguistic, social and racial. But the very South Indian Brahmans have been deliberately striving to keep alive a consciousness of their segregation and cultural isolation.[86]

The reaction of Ramaswami Naicker and his Self-Respecters was considerably more violent. In protest of Rajagopalachariar's proposed action they carried out a prolonged and spectacular series of demonstrations in Madras, bringing in many people from outside the city. More than a thousand demonstrators, including Naicker himself, were arrested. In December, 1938, while still in prison, Naicker was elected president of the almost defunct Justice Party, and it was as leader of this party that he first put forward his demand of "Tamil Nad for the Tamilians," or non-Brahmans.

A year or so later, when the Muslim League made its demand for Pakistan, Ramaswami Naicker, now known as *Periyār* or Great Sage, supported the claim and also made one for Dravidistan.[87] T. A. V. Nathan, who had succeeded Ramaswami Mudaliar as editor of *Justice*, backed Naicker's stand in an article in the *Deccan Times Muslim League Special* for April, 1941. The title was long but explanatory: "Some Thoughts on Dravidanad: Why

[85] *An Open Letter to the Hon. C. Rajagopalachariar from S. Somasundara Bharati* (Madras, 1937), p. 2.

[86] *Ibid.*, p. 7.

[87] B. S. Baliga, *Tanjore District Handbook*, p. 117.

We Believe in Separation Lies Our Salvation." "If it is understood that India is a mere geographical expression," Nathan said in the article, "and that there are within its boundaries at least three large entities each entitled to be called a nation, and wishing to be called as such, the internal problems of India solve of themselves. . . . These three nations [are] the Muslims, the Dravidians, and the Aryans, and their national states may be called Pakistan, Dravida Nad and Aryavarta."

Ramaswami Naicker carried on his propaganda for Tamil separation throughout the Second World War, and on August 27, 1944, at Salem, the Justice Party was formally changed to the Dravida Kazhagam (D.K.), having as its primary aim the realization of a separate non-Brahman or Dravidian country.[88] The role of C. N. Annadurai in this decision to change the name of the Justice Party was of the utmost importance, and it was to Annadurai that those who were interested in a more militant political organization began to drift. From the start, the Dravida Kazhagam, like the Self-Respect League, professed to be a social organization. Five years after the founding, Annadurai, backed by members of the D.K. who disliked Ramaswami Naicker's autocratic methods (in 1949 Naicker was seventy years old) and who officially at least frowned on his marriage to a girl many years younger than he—an act that was thought to be hypocritical in view of the social ideals of the movement—broke away from the D.K. On September 17, 1949, they formed a new organization, called Dravida Munetra Kazhagam (D.M.K.), which adopted all the doctrines of the parent organization but applied them to a political objective. It had as its chief goal the establishment of a Dravida Nad,[89] and was thus the first political party

[88] *Namatu kuṟikkōḷ* ["Our Aims"] (Madras, 1948), p. 36.

[89] Ti. Em. Pārttasārati, *Ti. Mu. Kaḻaka vaṟalāru* ["History of the D.M. Association"] (Madras, 1961), pp. 166–174. For a general discussion of the movement, see P. D. Devanandan, *The Dravida Kazhagam: A Revolt Against Brahminism* (Bangalore, 1959). Robert Hardgrave's *The Dravidian*

working for a separate Tamil state. This proved to be only the beginning of a long series of struggles that threatened the Indian Republic with secession. But the demand was most certainly the logical conclusion of the aims of the Self-Respect movement, whose first provincial conference had been held twenty years before.

In 1949 this demand for a separate Tamil state was made by a political organization soon to become militant and violent in its program, but there had been previous requests for such a state. Justice Party leaders had only asked for provincial autonomy for a multilingual Madras province, but the establishment of a separate Tamil-speaking nation was suggested by a non-Brahman who, as an official, had relatively few connections with the non-Brahman movement. In the Council of State in Delhi on March 15, 1926, C. Sankaran Nair proposed that the "Government of India advise His Majesty's Government to take such steps as may be required to constitute the ten districts inhabited by the 'Tamil-speaking race' into a province with complete self-government." "The Tamil nation," he believed, "was as intellectual as any other in India."[90] Several months later, on October 9, 1926, P. Varadarajulu Naidu, who criticized the Brahmanism of the T.N.C.C. over the Gurukulam issue, formed an association to "promote and foster the growth of a United Tamil Indian Nation."[91] These suggestions were more or less ignored at the time, and doubtless neither Sankaran Nair nor Varadarajulu Naidu would have anticipated the extremism which later would be generated by the demand for a separate political identity.

Movement (Bombay, 1965), gives an account of events and their implications since 1949.

[90] *Hindu* (weekly ed.), Mar. 18, 1926.

[91] *Ibid.*, Oct. 11, 1926. For a D.M.K. interpretation of Varadarajulu Naidu's politics, see the portrait by a fellow Balija, Si. Pi. Sirrarasu, *Ṭākṭar P. Varatarāsulu Nāyuṭu: avarkaḷin vāḻkkai varalāṟu* ["Dr. P. Varadarajulu Naidu: The Story of His Life"] (Madras, 1957).

That these early demands for a separate Tamil nation were echoed and developed by later politicians to the extent that a separate Dravida Nad became the *raison d'être* of a provincial party indicates that the solution to the conflict of provincial and national loyalties which had seemingly been reached in 1925, with the decline of the Justice Party, the attempts to modify Brahmanism in Congress, and the exit of Ramaswami Naicker from Congress, was no more than temporary. Indeed, the changes that occurred in 1925 were not a solution but a realignment of forces, which meant for the non-Brahmans a new means of expression, either in the Self-Respect movement or in Congress itself. Srinivasa Iyengar's key position as head of the Swaraj Party and president of the Indian National Congress in 1926, and his later involvement with Jawaharlal Nehru and the Independence for India League helped to edge Tamil Nad into national politics. But the events of late 1927 and early 1928 which culminated in the Calcutta Congress resolution demanding dominion status for India within one year and Gandhi's subsequent return to politics, resolved the Changer–No-Changer conflict by posing the imminent reintroduction of civil disobedience. In 1929, C. Rajagopalachariar as the confidant of Gandhi and as a Tamilian was able to capitalize on the more urgent political situation and galvanize support for civil disobedience in Tamil Nad—including support from those non-Brahmans who had recently entered Congress from the Justice Party—in a way that he had been unable to do in 1921 and 1922. For the first time Tamil Nad was involved willy-nilly in national politics.

At the same time, as a function of the discussion concerning the identity of the ancient Dravidians, expressions were made even in 1926 by Varadarajulu Naidu and Sankaran Nair for a separate Tamil nation. This devotion to Tamil and Tamil culture became the central theme of the Self-Respect movement, which adopted the Dravidianism of the Justice Party without its social conservatism. In its ideology, the Self-Respect movement com-

bined a strong anti-Brahmanism with a desire to level society and to give to untouchables and hitherto unpoliticized groups a sense of their own identity and value in a period of great social upheaval. Most importantly, the Self-Respect movement incorporated something from all the previous attempts to give Tamil culture a political and social dimension; it skillfully combined the geographical definition given to the Tamil country by Subramania Bharati, the Dravidianism of the Justice Party, the Tamil journalistic and political canvassing techniques of P. Varadarajulu Naidu and Tiru. Vi. Kaliyanasundaram Mudaliar, and the popular agitational skills developed during the Gandhian noncooperation movement. Its devotion to Tamil culture and its condemnation of Brahmans as the possessors of religious and social power helped to generate social conflict and the demand for Tamil separatism. In these matters, it prepared the way for the D.K. and its offshoot, the D.M.K.

Chapter 10

CONCLUSION

When the Justice Party was formed in late 1916 anti-Brahman sentiment was not a new phenomenon in Madras. In the 1880's and to an even greater extent in the 1890's, non-Brahmans in many different capacities voiced their concern about the growing number of Brahmans in the public services, in the Indian National Congress, and on the District Boards, and about Brahmans in general as the dominant group in the religious and social life of south India. This criticism was not confined simply to the Tamil areas; it appeared also in the Malayalam-speaking Malabar district, in Mysore, and in the Telugu districts. But even though feeling against Brahmans—and particularly against Tamil Brahmans—became a recurrent and ever louder theme, it was not until 1916 that a non-Brahman organization came into existence. Why did it not take shape twenty years earlier? A complete answer to this question must await further research in late nineteenth-century Madras politics, but several tentative reasons are apparent on the basis of the material at our disposal.

In 1896 the I.C.S. and other members of the British bureaucracy in Madras were hostile to Brahman politicians and to what they represented. Twenty years later, however, Mrs. Besant's Home Rule movement, with its Brahman support, seemed a much more alarming menace to the British *raj*, coming as it did after some years of Brahman participation in the Swadeshi and Terrorist agitations in Madras and elsewhere. Madras I.C.S. and police officials could point to the murder of the District Magistrate Ashe by a Brahman in 1911, and to many other acts of violence by

Brahmans in Bombay and Bengal to substantiate the claim that Brahmans—especially Brahman lawyers—were a threat to the peace and tranquillity of India. Furthermore, to the extent that Brahman city-trained politicians made demands that were not considered to represent the real needs of India but rather those of an artificial and highly vocal elite, it was felt that more attention should be paid to the increasingly persistent and articulate requests of the non-Brahman caste Hindus. Because they under the aegis of the Justice Party favored the continuance of ties between England and India, they gained the support of the British bureaucracy in Madras during a period when the Empire was threatened by war and when a demand for Home Rule for India was considered nothing short of treasonable.

In 1916–1917 the Justice Party was able to develop a leadership and a following that would have been impossible twenty years earlier. In 1896 there were few educated Hindus to take on the responsibilities of organizing a movement, or to comprise any very large membership. Furthermore, though there was in 1896 great hostility toward Brahmans, the hostility was not widespread in the non-Brahman community, nor of a character to stimulate political interest. Neither were there sufficient non-Brahmans in the higher ranks of the government services to support non-Brahman demands, whereas by the time of the hearings of the Public Services Commission in 1913, non-Brahman leaders could count on the backing of several important non-Brahmans in the government. Finally, the work of Caldwell and Nallaswami Pillai on the origins and nature of "Dravidian civilization" had met with a large, and growing, readership among first-generation college-educated non-Brahman caste Hindus.

Aside from the question of timing, two other points are relevant to an assessment of the non-Brahman movement. The first of these has to do with the importance of the Justice Party and what it represented for other regionalistic movements in India. What bearing has the development of the non-Brahman movement on

the reasons for official support and the internal development of other "backward classes" movements in India during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries? Second, what was the effect of the non-Brahman movement on the life of south India and of the nation generally? To what extent did it transform social and political relations in Madras province?

Government support to "anti-national" or "backward classes" movements in India has occurred in many contexts. When the I.C.S. officers in Madras assisted non-Brahmans in their drive for a more substantial control over the positions of importance in government employment, they were following a practice that had been part of I.C.S. thinking for many years. Yet when the Justice Party was given help by the government in 1918 and 1919 it was the first time that the traditional British distrust of Brahmans had been expressed in plainly political terms in Madras. One must remember that British members of the I.C.S. had had little experience with politics in England, and in India their attention was largely focused on the needs of the peasants in rural areas—needs which did not figure prominently in the demands of the Indian National Congress and the Home Rule movement. Therefore, in granting assistance to the Justice Party the British administration was probably seeking to do several things. First of all, the British seriously wanted to redress the social imbalance in Madras. According to British principles of social justice, the Brahmans possessed far too much social and religious control over the non-Brahman caste Hindus and the untouchables. Second, the British were still worried about saving the government services from complete domination by the Brahmans. Possibly, also, the British encouraged the Justice Party because they found it an effective way of keeping the province divided and weak, thus controllable, at a time when the British *raj* seemed to be threatened by the activities of Mrs. Besant and the Home Rule League. By encouraging the self-awareness of non-Brahmans, the British could help to popularize the need for a continued British connec-

tion with India, and in so doing maintain the stability of the British position. All these motives in different ways played a part in shaping the British administration's reaction to non-Brahman demands. There is, for example, little doubt that Lord Pentland was interested in keeping Brahman politicians in check, and of retaining the "administrative splendor" that Montagu found in Madras in December, 1917. At the same time, an important element in the Madras bureaucratic establishment continually sought to uphold the efficiency of the government regardless of caste considerations and resisted Justice Party attempts to impose measures giving preferential treatment to non-Brahman caste Hindus. The British reaction to the non-Brahman movement in Madras in the middle of the First World War was one in a series of attempts to quash the pretensions of south Indian Brahmans. In other words, the British administrators in Madras were responding in much the same way as might other provincial governments in India which wanted to limit the control of elites over public life. This suggests that one of the ways in which the British sought to "manage" nationalist expression in modern India was to encourage regionalist feelings. Maintaining the British hegemony meant keeping the country divided.

In many ways the regionalist feeling which arose in the Tamil area during the decade after the First World War was typical of movements of this sort elsewhere on the subcontinent. Customarily, such movements have used Legislative Councils to assure a position to "backward classes" in the matter of government employment; they have developed a myth of antiquity and cultural superiority; there has been a provincial political party to voice their demands, followed by a series of auxiliary organizations whose function it is to communicate the origin-myth to the wider population. A direct outcome of the non-Brahman movement was the legal granting to non-Brahman caste Hindus in Madras presidency of all the apparatus necessary to operate the provincial political, administrative, and educational machinery. With the

requisite government support, educational places for non-Brahman university students, a political party that served the needs of caste Hindus, and the cultural self-confidence that came with the articulation of the myth of Dravidian origin, non-Brahmans in the Tamil area were able to achieve a commanding position in the province. Like other Indian regionalist movements, the non-Brahman movement in south India not only allowed members of the non-Brahman elite to play a predominant provincial role but ultimately thrust them into positions of national importance, as politicians, administrators, businessmen, and so on.

It is often assumed that the only effect of the rise of the non-Brahmans to power in Tamil Nad was to force the Tamil Brahmans out into the cold, driving them away from the professional life of Madras and cutting them off from the sources of power at both provincial and national levels. As this study has sought to indicate, there is little question but that the drive of non-Brahmans for places in government and education and the decline of Brahman social and religious prestige in Tamil Nad—which became much worse in the 1930's and immediately after Independence—caused great anguish among Brahmans. Many were denied admission to colleges and universities and were discriminated against in government employment. But this hostility also forced them to rechannel their energies and interests into other areas of employment. One field in which they worked with great energy and imagination to find a place for able personnel was that of business and commerce. Indeed, Brahman efforts were so successful that present-day Madras business enterprise has a very large Brahman contingent. This redirection of Brahman literate and professional skills toward entrepreneurship was not entirely new even in the 1920's, despite many assertions to this effect by Brahman commentators at the time. Many Tamil Brahmans also entered educational institutions outside Madras, and others became businessmen, journalists, and bureaucrats in the cities of northern and western India. Thus the non-Brahman movement

had the effect of forcing many Tamil Brahmans out of the province and into the all-India sphere.

One of the important areas in which the Brahman provincial role was altered in the Tamil area was in the Tamil Nad Congress organization. During the 1920's and even more in the following decade, Brahmans in the T.N.C.C. were attacked both from without and from within; after non-Brahmans began entering Congress in large numbers following the 1927 Justice Party decision, Brahmans found their position increasingly tenuous. When Independence came, non-Brahmans were in control of most of the Congress leadership in the area. But the process by which the Tamil Congress became non-Brahman was only one of several ways in which the whole nature of south Indian politics and social relations was transformed with the introduction of the competitive style of politics. In the political arena the change was seen to some extent in the fight between Swarajists and Justicites for power and position in the Madras Legislative Council. In social life it affected a much wider variety of situations, at first in the towns, and later, with the rise of the Self-Respect movement, in the villages as well. Here the traditional position of the Brahmans at the head of the social hierarchy was challenged, and political and social relations between Brahmans and non-Brahmans were gravely shaken.

At the same time, the competitive style of politics which came in with the rise of the Justice Party in 1919 and 1920 also saw the introduction of the Montagu–Chelmsford Reforms. Though these Reforms were boycotted by the Congress, they nonetheless taught the educated of Madras the value of parliamentary democracy and gradually involved many persons formerly outside the political process. The Justice Party's participation in the Reforms exaggerated the already substantial administrative and political gulf between Madras and the central government in New Delhi. In arguing so forcefully with Delhi for the rights of Madras in the provincial contributions issue, Madras spokesmen were merely

giving political voice to what until then had been an administrative irritation. The feeling that Madras is being treated shabbily has been a continuing feature of twentieth-century politics. Right or wrong, Madras politicians and bureaucrats have continued to believe that their province is unique and that its problems require special attention.

In cultural terms, the non-Brahman caste Hindus, particularly from the Tamil area, considered that Tamil Nad had been the victim of Brahman scheming and attempted cultural conquest. Both in the 1920's and later this belief expressed itself in a demand for a "Tamil Nad for the Tamilians"—that is, for non-Brahmans—which could operate free from Brahman and north Indian interference. Tamil separatism therefore came to represent a distinct threat to Indian unity in the years immediately following Independence. Claims for a separate south Indian political entity have usually been expressed in terms of the validity of Tamil and Tamil culture as opposed to north Indian Sanskritic culture. This claim has implied the need to satisfy the aspirations of Tamil non-Brahmans and to promote the role that Tamil, both as a language and as a symbol, should play in regional affairs. As these aspirations are satisfied or acquire a place in the life of the country, the demand for a separate Tamil country is bound to become less insistent. Representatives of south India in the center, in both administration and in politics, will also enhance the connection of the south with the rest of Indian public life. Tamil separatist feeling and social conflict has perhaps brought about the decay of many traditional values, but it has also made Tamils more aware of their part in a developing India.

Appendix 1

THE NON-BRAHMIN MANIFESTO*

The time has come when an attempt should be made to define the attitude of the several important non-Brahmin Indian Communities in this Presidency toward what is called "the Indian Home Rule Movement," and also to indicate certain facts with respect to their present political position. Not less than 40 out of 40½ millions who form the population of this Presidency are non-Brahmins, and the bulk of the taxpayers, including a large majority of the zamindars, landholders and agriculturalists, also belong to the same class. But in what passes for politics in Madras they have not taken the part to which they are entitled. They have made little or no use of their influence among the masses for the general political advancement of the country. In these days of organized effort, they maintain no proper organizations for protecting or promoting their common interests and for preventing professional and other politicians, with hardly any corresponding stake in the country, from posing as their accredited spokesmen. Nor have they a Press of their own to speak the truth on their behalf. Their political interests, therefore (as compared with those of the Brahmins who number only about a million and a half) have materially suffered.

The Hon'ble Sir Alexander (then Mr.) Cardew now a Member of the Madras Executive Council in his evidence before the Public Service Commission in 1918, described, in detail, the relative positions of the Brahmins and the non-Brahmins in the

* Published in the *Hindu*, Dec. 20, 1916.

Public Service of this Province, not certainly as champion of non-Brahmin interests, but with a view to showing that if simultaneous examinations in England and India for admission into the Indian Civil Service were introduced, the Brahmins whom he characterized as "a small rigidly exclusive caste," would sweep that service. He is reported to have stated that in the competitive examinations for the Provincial Civil Service, which were held between 1892 and 1904, out of sixteen successful candidates fifteen were Brahmins giving a ratio of 94 per cent of Brahmin success. In the Mysore State where open competitive examinations for the Mysore Civil Service were held during the preceding twenty years, Brahmins secured 85 per cent of the vacancies. In the competition for the appointment of Assistant Engineers in Madras the number of successful candidates, during the same period was 17 Brahmins and 4 non-Brahmins. Similar results were produced by the competitive examination for the Accounts Departments. Out of 140 Deputy Collectors in Madras at the time, 77 were Brahmins, 30 non-Brahmin Hindus, and the rest Muhammadans, Indian Christians, Europeans, and Anglo-Indians. It is curious to note that even where competitive examinations did not exist, as for instance in the Subordinate Judicial Service of the Presidency, the major portion of the appointments were in the hands of the Brahmins.

Sir Alexander Cardew states that out of 128 permanent District Munsiffs in 1913, 93 were Brahmins, 25 non-Brahmin Hindus and the rest Mohammedans, Indian Christians, Europeans and Anglo-Indians. From these and other figures of a like nature he naturally concluded that an open competition for the Civil Service in India would mean an almost complete monopoly of the service by Brahmin caste and the practical exclusion from it of the non-Brahmin classes. Of course he did not invite the attention of the Public Service Commission to what prevailed in the important Native States, directly under the control of the Madras Government, where, too, the preponderance of Brahmins in the Government

Service then, as now, was not less marked. Nor did he go into the figures relating to the Subordinate Services which are recruited under a system almost wholly of patronage. Surely, in these services the preponderance of Brahmins would be still more striking.

With regard to what obtains at the present moment in the various branches of the government service, it is needless to go into the figures. But we cannot help calling attention to the highest appointments open to the Indians in the Presidency and the principle upon which they are distributed. Since the Executive Council of H.E. the Governor has been opened to Indians, three Indian gentlemen have been admitted into it in succession, the two latter being Brahmin lawyers. Of the five Indian judges of the High Court, four of them, i.e., all the Hindu judges, are Brahmins. In 1914 a new secretaryship to government was created, and a Brahmin official was forthwith appointed to it. The Indian Secretary to the Board of Revenue is a Brahmin; and of the two collectorships open to the members of the Provincial Civil Service that which has fallen to the share of communities other than the Mohammedan has nearly always gone to a Brahmin official.

What is true of Government Service is equally true of local and other bodies. Where the electorate is composed of a large number of Brahmins the non-Brahmin Indian has hardly a chance. It nearly always happens that while the non-Brahmins do not concentrate upon a single candidate, Brahmin or non-Brahmin, the Brahmins nearly always unite and support their caste man. The Madras University of which the majority of Indian Fellows, classified under several Indian groups, are Brahmins, has never returned a non-Brahmin Indian to the local Legislative Council, so much so that no non-Brahmin Indian, however well qualified otherwise, indulges in the hope of getting elected as Member for the University in the Legislative Council, unless it is with the support of the European Fellows. At a meeting of the Madras Legislative Council, held in November, 1914, in reply to an interpellation by the late Mr. Kunhi Raman Nayar, it was stated that

the total number of registered graduates of the University was 650 of whom 450 were Brahmins, 124 non-Brahmin Hindus and 74 belonged to other communities, and that since 1907, when election of Fellows by registered graduates began, 12 Fellows were elected of whom with one exception all were Brahmins. We are not aware that neither before 1907, when a sort of election of a few Fellows by graduates of a certain number of years standing was allowed, nor since 1914 when the statement referred to was made in the Legislative Council, the Graduates of the Madras University of whom the majority have always been Brahmins, elected a non-Brahmin as a Fellow of the University, so that the non-Brahmin, however distinguished, has little or no chance of getting into the Senate of the Madras University through what is called the open door of elections.

In the election to the Imperial and local Legislative Councils and to Municipal Bodies one finds the same truth illustrated, so far as these elections could be controlled by the "rigidly exclusive caste." If occasionally a fair-minded ruler endeavors to correct the inequality arising from the preponderance of Brahmins on any public-body by having recourse to nominations of individuals from comparatively unrepresented interests, he is severely criticized in the Brahmin press. How His Excellency Lord Pentland was dealt with by some of the papers in connection with the recent nominations to his Legislative Council may be cited as the latest example of this kind of hostile and unfair criticism. Outside these responsible bodies more or less under the control of the government even in the case of existing political organizations in the City of Madras as well as in the districts the figures regarding election, if gone into, will tell the same tale. To quote one of the latest instances, of the fifteen gentlemen elected from this Presidency to represent it on the All-India Congress Committee with the exception of one solitary non-Brahmin Indian, all are practically Brahmins and yet the decisions of this committee which is the executive of the Congress, upon matters of grave

import such as the revision of the Indian constitution after the war, will be held up to the world's admiring gaze as the considered opinions, among others, of the 40 millions of non-Brahmins of this large and important Province. It is our unfortunate experience that as concessions and rights are more freely bestowed, the rigidly exclusive caste grows still more rigid and exclusive.

In defense of all this practical monopoly of political power and high government appointments which make for that power, it is pointed out that though the Brahmins are only a small fraction of the population of this Presidency, they are far ahead of other communities in regard to university qualification. No one denies this. Old established traditions, the position of the Brahmins as the highest and the most sacred of the Hindu castes, the nature of their ancient calling, and the steady inculcation of the belief, both by written texts and oral teaching, that they are so many divinely ordained intermediaries without whose active intervention and blessing the soul cannot obtain salvation and their consequent freedom from manual toil—all these helped them to adapt themselves easily to the new conditions under British Rule, as under previous epochs, in larger numbers and far more successfully than the other castes and communities. Apart, however, from the question of English education, are large material stakes, traditional and inherited interests in the soil and the social prestige that goes with it, influence among the masses, quiet and peaceful occupations that tend to the steady economic development of the Province, and overwhelming numerical strength itself, to count for nothing? Should not the classes and communities that, from time immemorial, have stood for these, receive encouragement from the government? In the matter of education itself the advantage is not all on the side of the Brahmin castes. Though rather late in the field, the non-Brahmin communities have begun to move.

They now represent various stages of progress. Some of them

such as the Chetty, the Komati, the Mudaliar, the Naidu, and the Nayar, have been making rapid progress; and even the least advanced, like those who are ahead of them, are manfully exerting themselves to come up to the standards of the new times. The spirit of educational progress is abroad, and it is a significant circumstance that among some of the non-Brahmin communities the development is more harmonious and less one-sided than among the Brahmins. In spite of the singular solicitude which for reasons not apparent, the Department of Education has been showing for the education of Brahmin girls and especially of Brahmin widows as if the Brahmins were a backward class, the percentage of literates among the women of such non-Brahmin communities as the Nayars is higher than among the Brahmans. In a variety of ways and in different walks of life non-Brahmins will now be found unostentatiously and yet effectively contributing to the moral and material progress of this Presidency. But they and their brethren have so far been groping helplessly in the background, because of the subtle and manifold ways in which political power and official influences are often exercised by the Brahmin caste.

We do not deny that in these days of fierce intellectual competition the skill to pass examinations is a valuable personal possession. But it passes our understanding why a small class which shows a larger percentage of English-knowing men than their neighbors, should be allowed almost to absorb all the government appointments, great and small, high and low, to the exclusion of the latter among whom may also be found, though in small proportions, men of capacity, enlightenment and culture. The fact cannot be gainsaid that in spite of numerous obstacles in their path, as executive and as judicial officers, as educationalists, lawyers, medical men, engineers, public men and as successful administrators of large and important estates, the non-Brahmin communities have produced men of distinguished attainments and unquestioned eminence, some of whom have found no equals

in the Brahmin caste. Guided by their own sense of self-respect and enlightened self-interest, had they and their communities always acted in concert, even in the matter of government appointments and political power, they would have been at the top, a place which is theirs by right. As it is, for want of efficient separate organizations of their own and of the instinct or the inclination to make the freest and the most effective use of the modern weapon of publicity, their interests have not yet received their proper share of attention and recognition.

Not satisfied with the possession of the key to the present political position, the radical politicians of this Presidency, who are apparently never so happy as when they ask for fresh political concessions, irrespective of their suitability to the existing conditions, now ask for Home Rule and from previous experience we fear that if a discordant note is not sounded at the proper time it will of course be made out that all India is keen about Home Rule. It is not necessary for our purpose to go into the details of this extravagant scheme, or into those of the other submitted to His Excellency the Viceroy by nineteen members of the Imperial Legislative Council. We are not in favor of any measure which, in operation, is designed, or tends completely, to undermine the influence and authority of the British Rulers, who alone in the present circumstances of India are able to hold the scales even between creed and class and to develop that sense of unity and national solidarity without which India will continue to be a congeries of mutually exclusive and warring groups without a common purpose and a common patriotism. While we dissociate ourselves entirely from unauthorized Indian constitution-making which seems to be a favorite occupation with a certain class of politicians, we must say that we are strongly in favor of progressive political development of a well-defined policy of trust in the people, qualified by prudence, and of timely and liberal concessions in the wake of proved fitness. In the early days of the Indian National Congress, when that movement was directed and con-

trolled on the spot by such sagacious and thoughtful men as the late Messrs. A. O. Hume, W. C. Bannerjee, Budruddin Tyabji, S. Ramaswami Mudaliar, Rangiah Naidu, Rao Bahadur Sabhapathi Mudaliar, and Sir Sankaran Nair, enlightened non-Brahmins all over the Presidency gave it their hearty and loyal support. It was then, though not in form and name, but in spirit and method, a truly national institution. Some of the old ideals are still there. But the spirit in which, the method by which, and the persons by whom, it is at present worked, cannot, all of them, commend themselves to the thinking and self-respecting section of the non-Brahmin public of this Presidency. The social reactionary and the impatient political idealist, who seldom has his foot on solid earth, have now taken almost complete possession of the Congress. Democratic in aims, an irresponsible bureaucracy now manipulates its wires. We sincerely hope that sane and sober politicians, who know the country and its people, and who feel their responsibility to both, will soon reassert their mastery over the Congress machine, and direct it in strict accordance with the living realities of the present.

For our part we deprecate, as we have suggested, the introduction of changes not warranted by the present conditions. We cannot too strongly condemn caste or class rule. We are of those who think that in the truest and best interests of India, its government should continue to be conducted on true British principles of justice and equality of opportunity. We are deeply devoted and loyally attached to British rule. For that rule in spite of its many shortcomings and occasional aberrations, is, in the main, just and sympathetic. We, indeed, hope that our rulers will, as their knowledge of the country expands, be more readily responsive to public feeling when, of course, that feeling is clearly manifest and decidedly unambiguous, and that before they take any action they will examine the interests and wishes of each caste, class, and community with more anxious care than heretofore and in a less conventional manner. When the spirit of social exclusive-

ness and the rigidity of class and caste begin to disappear, the progress toward self-government will unquestionably be more satisfactory. But for the present the practical politician has to concern himself with what lies immediately in front of him.

After the triumphant conclusion of the war, the Indian Constitution will doubtless come before the British statesmen and British Parliament for revisions. India has earned the right to demand that the basis of her Constitution should be broadened and deepened, that her sons, representing every class, caste, and community, according to their acknowledged position in the country and their respective numerical strength, should be given fiscal freedom and legislative autonomy in matters affecting her domestic policy and economic position, and that, lastly she must be accorded a place in the empire conducive to the sense of self respect of her children as British subjects, and not inferior in dignity and power to that occupied by any self-governing colony.

We appeal to the enlightened members of the non-Brahmin communities to be up and doing. Their future lies in their own hands. Great and pressing is the task with which they are confronted. They have, in the first place, to educate their boys and girls in far greater numbers than they have yet done. Associations under the responsible guidance of leading non-Brahmin gentlemen should be started and maintained in a state of efficiency, in every populous center, not merely to induce the various non-Brahmin communities to avail themselves more freely of the existing facilities for education, and to create such facilities where they do not now exist, but also to find adequate funds for the education of such of their poor but intelligent boys and girls as cannot obtain instruction without extraneous pecuniary help. Indeed a more vigorous educational policy for the non-Brahmins has long been overdue. Side by side with the starting of associations for the advancement of the education of the non-Brahmin classes, must also be maintained, social and political organizations, and, where needed, well-conducted newspapers of their

own, both in the vernaculars and in English, to push forward their claims. By their attitude of silence and inaction they have failed to make their voices heard, and others more astute than they have used them for their own ends, with the result that there is a great deal of discontent among the non-Brahmins about their present lot as compared with that of their Brahmin fellow countrymen of which, perhaps the government is not fully aware. The discontent is growing every day, and the attention of the government will be drawn to it. But the non-Brahmins must first help themselves.

Let them do everything needful to ensure a continued educational, social, political, and economical development on a broad and enduring basis; and, then, their future as British subjects will be brighter and more prosperous than it is today. What is designated as "nation building" is a laborious task, involving indeed necessitating, in the slow process of evolution, the due performance, in the proper time, by each class and community, of the duty it owes to itself, first and foremost. It is our firm conviction that in India, for some time to come at any rate, every community has primarily to put its own house in order, so that, when it has to cooperate with other communities, possibly with higher social pretensions, it may do so not as a dependent and helpless unit to be made a figurehead or cat's paw of, but as a self-respecting and highly developed organization, offering its willing cooperation for the promotion of common objects on terms of perfect equality.

Appendix 2

FIRST COMMUNAL G.O.*

In order to increase the proportion of posts in Government offices held by non-Brahmans, the Government direct that the principle prescribed for the Revenue Department in Board's Standing Order No. 128 (2), on the subject of the distribution of appointments among various castes and communities, should be extended to appointments of all grades in the several departments of Government. All heads of departments and other officers empowered to make appointments are requested to adhere strictly to this principle in filling up vacancies in future.

2. Heads of departments, Collectors and District Judges are requested to submit to Government half-yearly returns showing, in respect to their own offices and the subordinate offices under their control, the number of men newly entertained in the permanent service during the half-year and classifying them under the following heads:

(1) Brahmans
(2) Non-Brahman Hindus
(3) Indian Christians
(4) Muhammadans
(5) Europeans and Anglo-Indians
(6) Others

The returns should be submitted not later than the 15th January and 15th of July of each year. The first return should be for the half-year ending 31st December 1921.

(by order of the Governor in Council)

N. E. Marjoribanks
Acting Chief Secretary

* MRO, Public, Ordinary Series, G.O. 613, Sept. 16, 1921.

Appendix 3

SECOND COMMUNAL G.O.*

In a resolution passed at their meeting held in August, 1921, the Legislative Council made a recommendation to the Government to the effect that, with a view to increasing the proportion of posts in Government offices held by non-Brahman communities, the principles prescribed for the Revenue Department in Board's Standing Order No. 128 (2) be at once extended to all departments of the Government and be made applicable, not only to the principal appointments, but to posts of all grades, and that the Government should issue orders accordingly and insist on their being enforced, and that to this end half-yearly returns showing the progress made should be submitted by the head of each office and that such returns should be made available to the members of the Legislative Council.

2. In giving effect to this resolution in G.O. 613, Public, dated the 16th September 1921, the Government called for a return showing the number of men newly entertained in the permanent service of Government during each half-year, classifying them under six main divisions. The first half-year's returns compiled under this order have now been received and a copy is attached to the present proceedings (Appendix I). It will be seen that the general percentage of new appointments from the several communities in the half-year ending 31st December 1921 is; Brahmans 22 per cent; non-Brahman Hindus 48; Indian Christians 10; Muhammadans 15; Europeans and Anglo-Indians 2; others 3.

* MRO, Public, Ordinary Series, G.O. 658, Aug. 15, 1922.

3. In circulating these returns, the Government are not unaware that some dissatisfaction has been expressed with the fact that they are confined to persons newly entertained, and a resolution was tabled for the substitution for them of returns of all appointments whether permanent, temporary, or acting and whether the officers appointed were appointed for the first time or promoted from subordinate grades. The Government have examined the question of extending the scope of the returns in the sense suggested and are disposed to agree that some amplification is necessary if the returns are to show the progress made in the carrying out of the policy in the matter of the representation of various communities in the public service which is expressed in the Board's Standing Order, namely, that endeavours should always be made to divide the principal appointments in each district among the several castes. The Government recognize that, if the principal appointments are to be divided among the several communities, the lower appointments from which recruitment is made to them must be likewise divided, and are quite prepared to agree that, in order to give effect to this policy, other things being equal, the principle specified in the Board's Standing Order should be given effect to both at the time of the initial recruitment and at every point at which men are promoted wholly by selection or by seniority. At the same time they have been unable to devise any form of return which would illustrate satisfactorily the progressive enforcement of such a policy as regards all the stages at which promotions, whether permanent, acting or temporary, are made, and His Excellency the Governor in Council, with the concurrence of his Ministers, has come to the conclusion, after careful consideration of that question, that the only way in which to secure satisfactory information as to the representation of the various communities in the different branches of the public service is to have a return made out once a year showing the extent to which each of the six main subdivisions is represented in each department. A comparison of any year's return with that

for the previous year will then show the extent of the progress made in any particular department. The return will be confined to non-gazetted officers and will be divided into two sections—one for officers drawing Rs. 100 and over and the other for officers drawing from Rs. 35 to Rs. 100. All heads of departments will be requested to secure from the officers subordinate to them a return of all the officers in the non-gazetted service who held permanent appointments of Rs. 35 and upwards on 1st April 1922. These returns should be submitted in time for publication by 1st October. A fresh return for the year ending 31st March 1923 should be submitted not later than August 1923.

4. In the case of officers in the gazetted service, the Government propose to accept the suggestion made in another resolution which was moved in the course of the last session to the effect that a column indicating the community to which each officer belongs should be added to the Quarterly Civil List. For the purpose of this entry, all heads of departments will be requested to call upon the officers whose names appear in the Civil List to declare to which of the six main divisions they belong and to send the return to the Superintendent, Government Press. The Superintendent, Government Press, will be requested to suggest a set of simple symbols which can be inserted after the names of officers so as to indicate to which of the six communities they belong.

5. Further, in pursuance of the desire, which has been repeatedly expressed in the Legislative Council and with which the Government has every sympathy, that the public officers in language areas should be manned, as far as possible, by persons belonging to those language areas, all heads of officers in Telugu districts and in Oriya tracts will be instructed to keep a record of all persons not belonging by origin to those districts or tracts, respectively, and to take steps so far as possible to reduce the proportion whenever opportunity offers. For the purpose of this order, the Telugu districts and the Oriya tracts will be defined in Appendix II.

6. The Government hope that the instructions given will suffice to meet the desires of members of the Legislative Council and others who have interested themselves in this matter and that the policy of Government being thus clearly declared, the demand for further statistics in regard to the representation of communities, castes or sub-castes in the public services generally or in particular offices will cease.

(By order of the Governor in Council)

R. A. GRAHAM
Chief Secretary

Appendix 4

ESTABLISHMENT OF THE STAFF SELECTION BOARD*

The Government have recently had under consideration the system by which appointments to the public services are at present made in this Presidency. The experience of other countries has shown that the best all-round system of making initial appointments is by competitive examination, and the Government recognize that, if the necessary standard of efficiency is to be maintained in the services and if the services themselves are to be rendered independent of political influences, it will become increasingly desirable to depend upon this system rather than upon patronage and nomination. At the same time they realize that the actual conditions differ in different countries; and the carrying out of the policy that they have always laid before them and that they have already publicly announced in G.O. No. 658, Public, dated 15th August 1922, of providing, so far as possible, equal opportunities for service for the different communities renders it impossible in practice to give complete effect to such a system. They have therefore, after full consideration, decided to take the following steps to secure the objects in view.

2. A Staff Selection Board will be constituted, with effect from 1st April 1924, to select persons suitable for appointment to the services. The duties of the Board will in the first instance be confined to (*a*) the selection of candidates suitable for appointment in all Government offices in the City of Madras, including the secre-

* MRO, Public, Ordinary Series, G.O. 76, Feb. 6, 1924.

tariat, and (*b*) the selection of candidates for the different classes of non-gazetted executive posts above the lowest grade for which direct recruitment is at present made.

3. The Staff Selection Board will in the first instance consist of five members including the Chief Secretary, the Surgeon-General and the Director of Public Instruction and two non-official gentlemen who will be nominated by His Excellency the Governor. The non-official members will receive traveling allowance at first-class rates for journeys made to attend sittings of the Board, but will be paid no salary or sitting fees. The Chief Secretary will be the Chairman of the Board. It will be open to the Board to constitute local committees at convenient centers throughout the Presidency, consisting of officials such as the Collector, the District Educational Officer and the District Medical Officer or the District Superintendent of Police, to assist it in the discharge of its duties. The Board is requested to make detailed proposals for the constitution of such committees and the definition of their functions. The Board will also probably need the assistance of a Secretary, who, it is suggested, might also perform the functions of the Secretary to the Commissioner for Government Examinations. In this respect too, however, the proposals of the Board itself will be awaited.

4. The functions of the Board will be as follows:—

I. *Selection of Candidates for all Government offices in the City of Madras.*—It will be the duty of the Board—

(1) to invite applications and to collect from educational institutions the names of those who are prima facie suitable both educationally and physically for appointment to the public service. For this purpose candidates will be required to provide themselves with medical certificates;

(2) from the lists so obtained to select candidates for examination, bearing in mind the principle mentioned above of providing equal opportunities for the members of the different communities;

(3) to arrange to subject those selected to a qualifying examination;

(4) to fix a fee sufficient to cover the expenses incidental to the scheme which will be levied from each candidate who enters for the qualifying examination and will not under any circumstances be returnable;

(5) on the results of the examination and after interviewing candidates, if necessary, and arranging for their examination by a competent medical board, to publish lists of those who are declared to have passed, specifying the nature of the appointments for which they are declared to be suitable.

Departments of the Secretariat and heads of offices will then be required to make appointments as vacancies occur from among those on the lists.

In order to afford opportunities for employment to some of those who are declared to have passed, but who cannot be immediately provided with appointments, the Government are prepared to maintain a waiting list which will contain not more than twenty names at a time and to pay those on the list a monthly stipend of Rs. 20 until they can be absorbed in arising vacancies. In the interval before appointment these men should receive a practical training in the principles of office procedure, typewriting, shorthand, precis-writing and accounts; the Board is requested to make detailed proposals for the organization of such a training institute and to draw up the necessary regulations for its working, bearing in mind that recipients of the stipends should not be permitted to accept employment elsewhere than under Government without refunding the amount paid to them and that they should be required to accept such employment under Government as may be offered to them as vacancies arise. It is suggested that the training might be carried out under the general supervision of the Secretary to the Board, but it will be left to the Board to decide how far to make use of existing institutions in Madras for teaching typewriting, shorthand, etc.

II. *Selection of candidates for non-gazetted posts above the lowest grade.*—The classes of appointments which the Government have in mind are those like probationary Revenue Inspectors, Deputy Tahsildars and Sub-Inspectors in the Salt and Police departments. They may also, however, call upon the Board to assist them in the selection of candidates for the higher executive appointments.

It will be the duty of the Board —

(1) To compile a list of non-gazetted posts above the lowest grade for which appointments are made direct, to ascertain for which of these appointments selection is at present made by specially appointed departmental selection committees and to submit proposals as to which of them it can deal with itself and which should be dealt with by local committees.

NOTE.—In some cases the Board may invite the local committees to make a preliminary selection and others perhaps it may leave the final selection to them. The following clauses will accordingly apply, mutatis mutandis, to the local committees as well as the Board itself.

(2) To invite applications from time to time for appointments of the several classes and to interview and select candidates whom it considers suitable for appointments of each class.

(3) To supply heads of departments with lists of those whom it considers suitable for appointment to posts under their control:

Provided that in making its selection the Board will invite each head of department concerned to nominate representatives of the department who will attend the meeting of the Board and assist it in making its choice.

Provided also that in making its selection it will be for the Board to decide whether to see all candidates at the same time or to interview candidates for different groups of appointments separately according to the qualifications required for each group.

Heads of departments will be required to make appointments from the lists supplied to them by the Board, but as an alternative

the Board may also consider whether it would not be preferable to institute a qualifying examination or series of qualifying examinations for groups of appointments requiring similar qualifications on much the same lines as the qualifying examination referred to in paragraph 4 (I) above; and then leave it to heads of departments to make the appointments themselves from any of the names on the lists of qualified candidates.

5. There remains for consideration the machinery by which the Staff Selection Board is to carry out the functions assigned to it in paragraph 4 (I) and (II) and the nature of the examinations that will be required.

For the present the Board will make use of the existing machinery of the Commissioner for Government Examinations for the purpose of conducting such examination as it may consider necessary. It will perhaps be sufficient in the first instance to hold one examination a year in the month of July and to confine the subjects for examination to English composition, precis-writing, a general knowledge paper and possibly one or two optional subjects. It is the intention of the Government that the Board itself should draw up rules regarding the educational qualifications required for admission to the examination, the age of the candidates, the nature of the questions and how far the examination should be oral and how far written, the main object being to subject the candidates to a suitable test of their fitness for employment in Government offices. It is impossible to lay down more precise details until experience has shown what is required in practice. It is also the intention of the Government that the Selection Board should eventually take over all the functions of the Commissioner for Government Examinations and possibly also those of the Board of Examiners and when it has done so should consider whether it would not be possible to improve and coordinate the present system of departmental training that follows appointment and the various departmental examinations and special tests. It is also contemplated that as time goes on and

experience is gained it will be possible to establish branches of the Board in mufassal centers and ultimately to make general the plan of recruitment which it is proposed to apply in the first instance to the City of Madras. In these matters, however, the Government will await the detailed recommendations of the Selection Board after its appointment.

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Most of the sources on the origins of the non-Brahman movement and Tamil separatism are to be found in Madras city. Many valuable insights into government policy toward politics can be gathered from government documents at the Madras Record Office, particularly those in the Public and Home departments. A special department, the Public (Reforms) Department, was established for the express purpose of handling the implementation of the Montagu–Chelmsford Reforms, and a perusal of the proceedings of this department is essential for an understanding of the Madras government's attitude toward constitutional reform in general and the role that the government thought Indians should play in that enterprise. I was not permitted to consult the confidential Government Orders for the period after 1912 at the Madras Record Office, but the material I used was of great value in studying the role of government in south Indian politics. Good indexes are available for these Government Orders, but the Notes appended to the G.O.s provide more insight for historians than the G.O.s themselves.

Newspapers, particularly the *Hindu*, the *Madras Mail*, and *New India*, are indispensable for an analysis of the non-Brahman movement before 1929. Mrs. Besant's *New India* in its heyday between 1915 and 1918 was a remarkable newspaper. In addition to much provincial news and comment, it contained a great wealth of letters to the editor, articles by protagonists of Home Rule, and before 1919, full statements of Congress activities. The

most interesting parts of the issues of *New India* are the editorials, many of them signed by Mrs. Besant herself. The paper also printed many letters and some articles that were hostile to the Home Rule movement, and it published a number of C. Subramania Bharati's English poems and prose writings while he was in Pondicherry. The *Madras Mail*, representative of English civilian and commercial opinion in Madras, also contained a large amount of news and comment on political happenings. The *Mail*'s initial reaction to Montagu in 1917 illustrates the way the Madras establishment, civil and business, viewed the incursion of a British politician into Indian affairs, and it also suggests the attitudes of Englishmen in other areas of the subcontinent. In the years between 1920 and 1928 the *Mail* was the main voice of Madras sentiment concerning the central government's demand for provincial contributions. The paper that represented the most interesting elements in south India, however, was the Madras *Hindu*, which in the period between 1916 and 1929 was a paper of unusual stature, containing news and comment about both south Indian and all-India affairs. The *Hindu* gave accounts of a wide spectrum of religious, social, and political events, and it had by far the most comprehensive coverage of Justice Party tactics, personnel, and activity. As a source for the study of south Indian life in the twentieth century, the files of this paper are unsurpassed.

Files of *Justice* are nowhere available in a complete series. Selected copies of the paper for the period 1927–1934 are in the possession of A. S. Venu, and these are extremely valuable for the light they shed on Justice Party organization, though, unfortunately, they cover a period after the Justice Party had begun to decline. Aside from these copies of *Justice* and the proceedings of a court case against the Rajah of Panagal brought by O. Kandaswami Chetti in early 1926, there is little that indicates the nature of Justice Party organization. Other selections from *Justice* for the period of the 1920–1923 Legislative Council are available in

a file of many of K. V. Reddi Naidu's speeches, in the possession of K. V. Gopalaswami, K. V. Reddi Naidu's son. Mr. Gopalaswami also has the diary kept by Reddi Naidu on his trip to London in 1919, an enormously detailed and hence particularly valuable record. Cuttings from several other newspapers are available in a set of "Home Rule Scrap Books" at the Library of the Theosophical Society at Adyar. Finally, the bound volumes of the reports of the native press of Madras presidency for this period contain much valuable material. In particular, besides selections from *Justice* editorials which are not available elsewhere, the Madras Native Newspaper Reports have much on the origins and development of the Self-Respect movement and reproduce many editorials from *Kudi Arasu* and *Revolt.*

Contemporary pamphlets and books in English related to the growth of separatist feeling in Tamil Nad and the non-Brahman movement in the first and second decades of this century are to be found mostly in the libraries of the *Hindu* in Madras and the Theosophical Society at Adyar, and—most completely—in the British Museum and the India Office Library in London.

I have utilized all the Tamil material that was available to me. In general, the works in Tamil that I consulted fell into four categories: biographies, autobiographies, polemic statements, and anthologies. Those listed in the bibliography are merely an indication of the variety and richness of the material that exists. A number of excellent anthologies contain editorials, speeches, and cartoons from particular writers or journals. The volume of editorials written by Tiru. Vi. Ka. for *Desabhaktan*, called *Tēsapaktāmirtam* ("Nectar of Patriotism"), reprints much that set the tone for Tamil journalism; though relatively few of the editorials deal with the subject of Tamil separatism, they give an indication of the vigor and excitement of Tamil journalism at the end of the First World War. Tiru. Vi. Ka.'s editorials for his own journal, *Nava Sakti*, are less rousing than the earlier ones, but those in the anthology *Tamil sōlai* ("Tamil Garden") are valuable as show-

ing Tiru. Vi. Ka.'s journalistic output in the 1920's and 1930's. Collections of C. Subramania Bharati's writings are numerous, and I cite only one volume of his poems. Works such as *Tamiḻ nāṭu vinotap paṭaṅkaḷ* ("Cartoons from *Tamil Nadu*") also indicate the quality of P. Varadarajulu Naidu's interesting weekly.

Anyone who has examined the truly amazing collection of Tamil books and pamphlets at the India Office Library quickly realizes that pamphleteering on religious, social, and political topics has been going on vigorously in south India, especially in the Tamil region, for many decades. This collection, dating from the 1880's, contains caste histories of Vellalas, Kammas, Visvakarmas, Nadars, and Balija Naidus; statements of the leaders of Tengalai and Vadakalai Sri Vaishnava sects; pamphlets by Brahmans arguing the need to maintain Varnashrama Dharma; and anti-Brahman pamphlets. Material of this sort forms an important genre in modern Tamil writings, though in the years since Independence it has become more popular, and less sophisticated. J. P. D. David's *Tiraviṭa iyakkamum vēḷāḷak kavuṇṭarum* ("The Dravidian Movement and the Vellala Gounders") is only one example of the type—self-explanatory in its title—that began to appear half a century ago. The Self-Respect movement produced pamphlets of an even more popular and violent sort. *Namatu kuṟikkōḷ* ("Our Aims") is an interesting record of resolutions that were passed at various times during a period of two decades by the Self-Respect League and later the Dravida Kazhagam. It demonstrates the process by which many Justice Party ideas were transformed into popular and militant slogans.

I found biographies and autobiographies very helpful. S. Ambujammal's *Eṉ tantaiyār* ("My Father") is an interesting biography of S. Srinivasa Iyengar by his daughter. The biography of S. Srinivasa Raghavaiyangar, the brother of the *Hindu*'s editor S. Kasturi Ranga Iyengar, by K. Sundara Raghavan and K. Ranga Raghavan has much important material for late nineteenth-century Madras public life. Some of the material from this book was used by

V. K. Narasimhan for his biography of Kasturi Ranga Iyengar. Another biography of a Congress politician, A. Krishnamachariyar's *Arasiyal ñāni, araṅkasāmi aiyaṅkār* ("Political Stalwart, Rangaswami Aiyangar"), is especially important for an analysis of Tamil politics in the 1930's. It contains much that can be found nowhere else, including details on Rangaswami Aiyangar's editorship of the Tamil newspaper *Swadeshimitran*.

Perhaps the most fascinating of all the Tamil biographies I used was Sitambaranar's *Tamiḻar talaivar* ("Tamilians' Leader"), which is a life of Ramaswami Naicker. It is written with economy and considerable skill, though not without some bias, and it accurately traces Ramaswami Naicker's connections with the Justice Party and the Self-Respect movement. Sitambaranar had access to a large file of materials unavailable to present-day researchers, mainly clippings from *Kudi Arasu*.

Tiru. Vi. Kaliyanasundaram Mudaliar's autobiography, *Vāḻkkaik kuṟippukaḷ* ("Notes on Life") provides the most complete and intimate account of any of the Tamil political and social figures at this time. Tiru. Vi. Ka.'s activities as a member of the Madras Presidency Association, his connection with the labor movement in Madras, and his leadership of the Saiva Siddhanta organizations are delineated with considerable detail. The autobiography gives one some insight into the personality of this man—who is one of the most interesting and important individuals in the awakening of the Tamil consciousness, and well worth further study, Swami Vedachalam (Maraimalaiyatikal) also deserves more study. Like Tiru. Vi. Ka., he contributed much to the ideology of the Tamil separatist movement through Tamil publications such as *Vēḷāḷar nākarikam* ("Vellala Civilization") and *Tamiḻar matam* ("Tamilians' Creed"), published in 1941, which seeks to connect the Tamils with the Indus Valley civilization and Egypt.

Finally, I was able to interview numerous persons in Madras, many of whom were actual participants in the non-Brahman

movement. I acknowledge their cooperation with sincere thanks: T. S. Avudaiappa Pillai, son of T. N. Sivagnanam Pillai; K. V. Gopalaswami, son of K. V. Reddi Naidu; S. Guruswami, former editor of *Revolt*; R. V. Krishna Ayyar, former Secretary of the Madras Legislative Council; Mrs. S. Krishnamurthi, daughter of A. P. Patro; S. G. Manavala Ramanujam, former Justice Party member; P. N. Marthandam Pillai, former Justice Party member; Mrs. S. Muthulakshmi Reddi, protagonist of women's rights; N. V. L. Narasimha Rao, former Congress member; D. V. K. Raghava Varma, nephew of P. Ramarayaningar, later the Rajah of Panagal; the Rajah of Chettinad, former Justice Party member; P. T. Rajan, former Justice Party member; S. Ramanathan, former editor of *Revolt*; E. V. Ramaswami Naicker, founder of the Self-Respect movement and the Dravida Kazhagam; Mariadas Ratnaswami, former Justice Party member; V. R. Runganatha Mudaliar; former Justice party member; A. T. Sreshta, son of M. S. Sreshta, Justice Party member; G. V. Subba Rao, biographer of K. V. Reddi Naidu; P. G. Sundarajan, biographer of S. Satyamurti; W. V. Venkata Rao Mudaliar, son of W. Viraghava Mudaliar, Justice Party member; A. S. Venu, former associate of C. N. Annadurai; T. Venugopal Rao, son of T. Varadarajulu Naidu; T. Vinayaka Mudaliar, former Justice Party member.

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